

'Tis The Season To Protect Yourself And Your Property

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a different interpretation, and "'tis the season' means time to steal!

As we all know, the opioid epidemic has reared its ugly head in our county, as it has throughout our state. This epidemic brings a host of problems outside of the obvious overdoses and deaths. Crimes involve stealing directly from people, known as a robbery, and stealing from people's homes or vehicles, referred to as thefts or breaking and entering, are the most common.

Unfortunately, these crimes are often carried out by addicts as a means to obtain money and valuables necessary to get their hands on the nasty drugs that have taken over their lives. Frequently during this time of year, expensive merchandise, purses, wallets, clothing, electronics and toys are left in vehicles and are

easily seen and targeted by thieves on the prowl. Below are a few tips to follow *during and after* the holiday seasons to ensure your safety and to protect your property.

SAFETY TIPS

- If you see someone acting suspicious, call 911. Pay attention to your gut feelings. If something doesn't feel right, chances are you are correct. Remember, you will not get in trouble for calling 911, and you can always remain anonymous.
- When shopping, park in well-lit areas. Criminals prefer the cover of darkness to avoid being detected.
- Always lock your vehicle and set the alarm if available (even if it's in

front of your home).

- Do not leave your car on while unattended. This is illegal.
- Lock your vehicle's door as soon as you get inside.
- Store all valuables, presents, purses and handbags in the trunk, out of view. If driving an SUV, put these items in the rear storage area so they cannot be easily seen through the front window.
- Keep all change out of view in your console area.
- Shop with a friend or family member. Remember, your safety is greater in numbers. Criminals seek out the most vulnerable targets.

• If you feel uneasy walking to your car at night, seek out a security guard to escort you to your vehicle. Be aware of your surroundings regardless if you're in a store or outside in a parking lot.

- Do not leave your purse or handbag unattended in a shopping cart. This makes for an easy target when your back is turned.
- Keep your home locked, and your garage door closed and alarmed if available, especially when you are not home.
- If packages are being delivered to your address when you are not home, have a friend, neighbor or family member secure the package for you if possible.

It's that time of year. You know, the time you open your wallet more than you care to, to pull out your debit card and buy gift after gift. It's vital to take a few easy steps to protect the gifts you have to buy, your other personal belongings and, most importantly, yourself and your family during the holiday season.

For us law-abiding citizens, we say "'tis the season" with the happy, joyous feeling of spending time with family, giving to loved ones and those less fortunate, and decorating our homes with more lights and extension cords than are probably allowed. But those criminals lurking in the shadows have