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Keep Your Holidays Merry and Crime-Free: *Twelve Crime Prevention Tips for the Holidays:*

Criminals love the holiday season as much as everyone else, especially because it is an opportune time for crime with more people shopping and traveling. The National Crime Prevention Council reminds all Americans of the following tips as they prepare for the holidays this year:

At Home:

1. Lock your doors and windows while out shopping or visiting friends and family. Close to 60 percent of all burglaries show no sign of forced entry.
2. Take a home inventory by taking photographs and make a list with serial numbers so that if you should be burglarized, recovered items can be identified and insurance claims are easier to file.
3. If you're out for the evening, turn on lights and a radio or television so it looks like someone is home
4. Be aware of charity fraud; give only to established charities or if you're not certain ask for identification, ask for a callback number, or that donation materials be mailed to you

If You're Traveling:

5. Get an automatic timer for your lights
6. Ask a neighbor to watch your home and arrange for snow removal while you're away
7. Don't forget to have your mail and newspaper delivery stopped

If You're Shopping:

8. Enjoy the decorations and merchandise, but stay alert. Always be aware of what is going on around you.
9. Park in a well lit space and be sure to lock your doors, close your windows, and don't leave packages visible through car windows; lock them in the trunk or if possible take them directly home.
10. Avoid carrying large amounts of cash; pay with checks or credit cards as much as feasible
11. Take only what you need in purse or wallet, and keep a tight hold on it. Carry purse closed and snugly against your body; carry your wallet in a front pocket or coat pocket.
12. When shopping online, only use sites that use "Secure Sockets Layer" (SSL) for its payment process to encrypt the personal and financial information by looking for the icon of a locked padlock at the bottom of the screen and "https" in the address