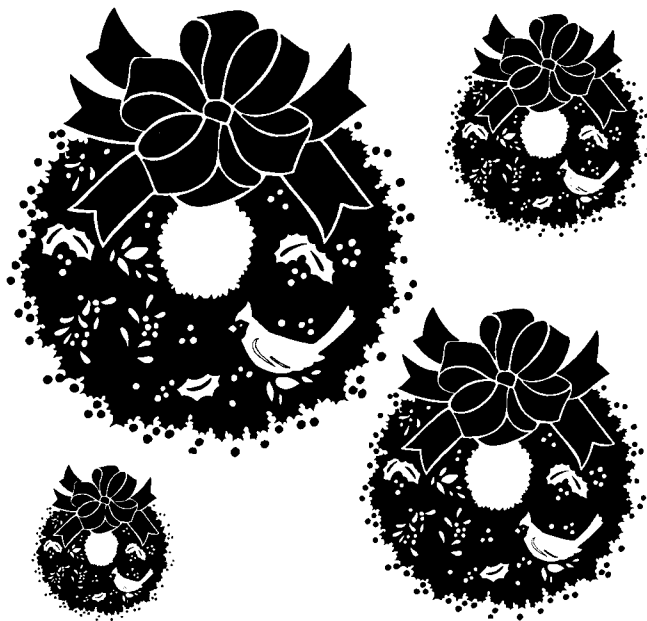
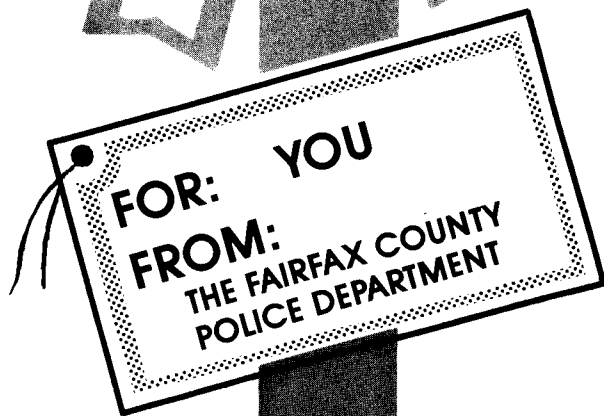
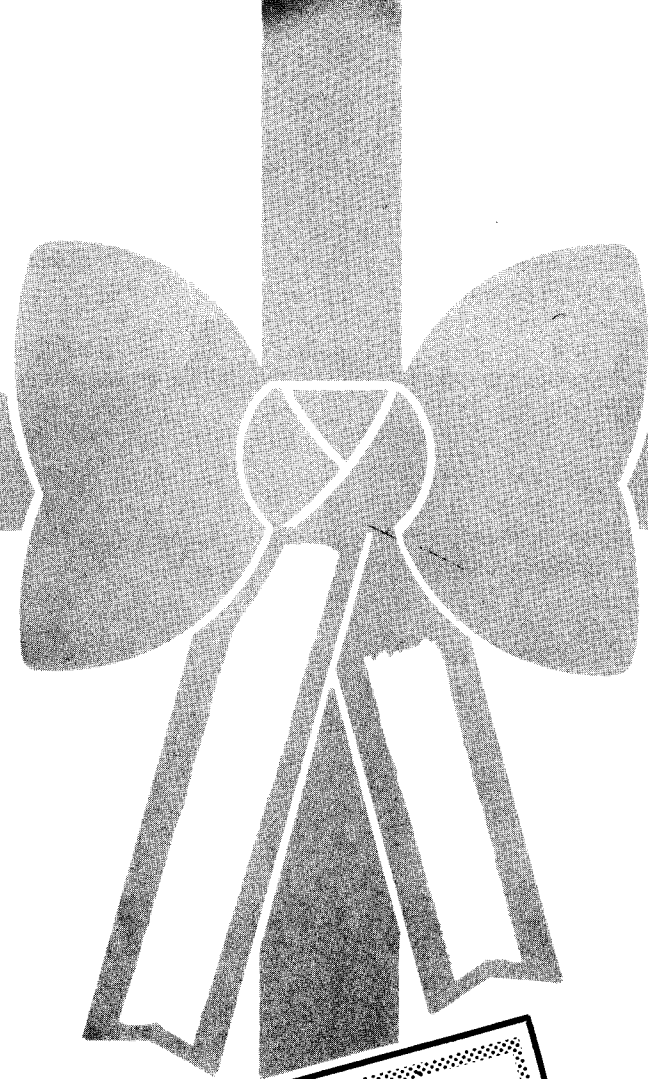


If you plan to serve alcoholic beverages, you need to be aware of applicable laws. It is a criminal violation for anyone under the age of 21 to possess alcoholic beverages and it is unlawful for an adult to permit the possession or consumption of alcohol by anyone under 21. Make sure you keep the consumption of alcoholic beverages within your home or out of sight of the general public.



These holiday hints were prepared by the Fairfax County Police Department, hoping that you'll enjoy a safe and happy holiday season. For additional safety and crime prevention tips, contact your local Fairfax County Police Department District Station.

The Fairfax County Police Department is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc.



The hustle and bustle of the holiday season makes it one of the busiest seasons of the year. Whether you're heading "over the river and through the woods to Grandma's," or just to the local shopping center, the increased traffic is one of the first signs of the season. Almost as predictably, the pace of life seems to speed up as the holidays draw near.

To protect yourself from injury and your possessions from being stolen during this busy time, it pays to exercise extra caution. Preventing thefts while you're shopping or away on vacation is largely a matter of taking the right preventive measures. The increased traffic caused by shoppers and vacation travelers also calls for added alertness on the roadways.

By making protective measures and increased awareness part of your holiday routine, you stand a good chance of having a safe and happy holiday season. This pamphlet is full of hints to help you play it safe. Some are common sense reminders and others are precautions you may have overlooked.

Here's How To Play It Safe . . .

While Shopping . . .

Despite holiday cheer, there's a "Scrooge" in every crowd—someone who wants to take advantage of your holiday spirit. Crowded shopping centers can provide lucrative rewards for thieves. As a general rule, your best protection is to make theft as difficult as possible. Even thieves know that the harder you make it for them, the better the chances are that they'll be caught. If they sense this risk, they'll probably pass you by.

Carrying large sums of money is bad news. It's best to try to be discrete with your transactions. Flashing large amounts of cash can be just what a thief is watching for. Credit cards can be convenient and safer than cash, but only if you use them wisely. Never carry more credit cards than you plan to use, and remember to keep up-to-date records of your card numbers in a safe place. It's also a good idea to record the telephone numbers associated with each card. Should your cards be lost or stolen, it's important to notify all of the credit card companies immediately!

A purse is an easy target for a thief if it's carelessly carried. Make it difficult for purse-snatchers by carrying it under your arm whenever possible. It's best not to carry too many packages, but if you must, be especially careful of your purse.

Keep your wallet safe from pickpockets by carrying it in an inside jacket pocket instead of a back trousers pocket. Be aware of anyone bumping into you and look out for "staged" events. Often pickpockets attempt to distract their victims so they won't notice their wallets being taken.

Lock your valuables in the trunk of your car. Leaving items inside the car where they can be seen easily is asking for trouble. Valuables which are safely out of sight are no temptation to thieves. Make it a habit always to lock your car doors and close all windows before leaving, even if you're gone for just a few minutes!

It's a smart idea to try to coordinate your shopping trips with a friend if you plan to be out late. There is truth to the old adage, "there's safety in numbers." A thief looking for a victim is less likely to bother several people traveling together. It also pays to avoid parking in unlit parking lots, no matter how convenient they are, and to stay in well-lighted areas when walking to

and from your car. Children should be advised not to venture into parking lots by themselves. They should also be taught their address and phone number as soon as possible in case they become lost in shopping center crowds. Instruct your child to go to a store clerk and ask for help if you become separated during a shopping trip.

While Traveling . . .

When holiday traveling is planned, take some precautionary measures before you head out. The place to start is with your car. Have a mechanic thoroughly check your vehicle to make sure it's road-worthy. Have the brakes, brake fluid, tires, hoses and belts inspected. Make sure your battery, lights and windshield wipers are in good working order, too. Finally, check to see that you have a good supply of safety flares.

Allow yourself extra time for your trip. Since traffic and parking problems often increase during the holiday season, it's not worth being in a rush. Be patient and courteous to other drivers because even a minor accident can spoil your holiday. If you're traveling a long distance, the extra time you've allotted will allow you to rest periodically. Starting in the late afternoon and early evening lookout for tired or "tipsy" drivers. If you're flying, keep your tickets and money secure. Stay alert and try not to let your children or the commotion distract you. A handbag or purse with all your tickets and cash can be stolen in a second.

Before departing on your trip, it's a good idea to take some precautions around your house. Make your home look lived in while you're away by arranging for a neighbor to pick up your papers and mail. If possible, leave a car parked in your driveway and use timers to periodically turn indoor lights on and off. Leave some shades up and curtains open so your home

doesn't look closed up. Alert your Neighborhood Watch that you'll be away and ask them to keep a close eye on your home.



While At The Office . . .

The holiday season is often marked by numerous office celebrations and a festive atmosphere that sometimes finds people failing to use common sense in protecting themselves and their possessions.

Thieves will take advantage of any opportunity presented them. During the holidays, when office workers are busy thinking about parties or their holiday vacations, thieves know that they may be distracted. Be as cautious during this time of year as you would during the rest of the year. Be careful of "delivery" persons, especially those with "wrong addresses," and carefully check the identifications and instructions of all "repairmen" seeking to remove expensive typewriters, computer equipment or other office machines.

An office party crowd is a good place for a thief to work because party goers aren't always paying attention to their belongings. Always keep your purse or wallet locked securely in your desk and remember to lock up calculators and other small items before hosting an open house or office party. Valuable items lying around are tempting to thieves.

Make sure all your guests get home safely by encouraging them to try non-alcoholic beverages. Offer a variety of refreshments and arrange for non-drinkers to drive drinking guests home. You can also call a taxi for anyone who's had too much to drink.

There are people who will take advantage of your holiday generosity, so be wary of strangers coming to your door asking for charitable donations. Ask them for proper identification and how the funds will be used. If you're not satisfied with their answers, don't give.

While At Home . . .

They say, "There's no place like home for the holidays." If that's where you plan to stay, there are plenty of things you can do to safeguard yourself and your possessions.

Start by protecting your family and home from fire by buying a new battery for your smoke detector. It's the best gift you can buy for your family. Teach children and pets not to play with or near tree lights, electrical connections, candles or appliances.

Keep your gifts and possessions safe from burglars by placing them where they can't be seen from windows or doorways. Again, the best deterrent is a house that looks lived in with valuables kept out of sight. Remember to keep an accurate, up-to-date inventory of your things. You may have a good memory, but you'd be surprised how difficult it is for burglary victims to recall things that are missing. Mark items like televisions, silverware, VCR's, stereos and cameras with your driver's license number and state abbreviation (Example: for Virginia, VA 123-45-6789). Electric engravers are available at all Fairfax County Public Libraries. Record serial numbers before you wrap gifts or immediately after opening them.

While Having A Holiday Party . . .

Everyone enjoys a holiday get-together. It's a chance to celebrate with friends or relatives and share the holiday spirit. If you plan to throw such a party, there are a few things you should keep in mind to insure that your gathering is all that you want it to be.

Be considerate of your neighbors. Advise them if you plan to have loud entertainment or anticipate a parking problem along your street. Give them an idea of when you expect your party to end, and try to abide by it. Most neighbors are more than willing to put up with minor inconvenience if they're consulted first. To minimize the likelihood of a complaint, try to keep noise at a reasonable level, and keep your crowd under control. If the police do receive a noise complaint, your immediate compliance with the noise ordinance is important.

A lively party can attract unwanted guests. Look out for party crashers and people who don't belong there, and remember that vandalism and theft can occur. Don't let people wander into unoccupied areas of your home and place money, jewelry, guns or other valuables where they are aren't visible or easily accessible.