

# Family Safety Tips for Year End Holidays

The early weeks of the winter and holiday season are a good time to focus on family safety awareness. As we begin to experience cold weather, ice, snow and the winds of winter, and prepare our homes and businesses for holiday decorating and entertaining, we would be well served to review some basic personal, financial, automobile and fire safety tips

## Holiday Decoration Checklist:

- Does your live tree have fresh green needles? Check at time of purchase
- Discard trees that have dried out
- Check water level of Xmas trees daily and make sure that bottom of tree is always covered by water
- Make sure the tree is securely fastened in the tree stand so it cannot be tipped over easily
- Keep several fire extinguishers around the house
- Make sure an artificial tree is of flame-retardant material; check the label before buying
- Keep tree safe distance (3ft.) from fireplaces, other heat sources
- Don't block an exit
- Light Strings - UL label? Inspect each for frayed wires, cuts, and other defects
- Unplug before replacing bulbs
- Keep light strings safely away from young children and pets
- Lights strings are marked for indoor or outdoor use (green-indoors, red- outdoors (or indoors))
- Don't put more than three strands end to end; this could cause a circuit to burn out
- Have an ample supply of replacement fuses for electrical boxes that still use them
- Turn off electrical decorations at night and when not at home
- Avoid use of tinsel; it is easy for children to pull off decorations and swallow them and pets also like playing with tinsel and can pull off tree and tip the tree over
- Glass ornaments should be placed high up on the tree
- Smaller ornaments should be out of reach of children
- Place ornaments that have sequins or beads on higher branches; use ribbon instead of hooks
- Avoid plants such as mistletoe or poinsettias and holly because they can be toxic to children and pets
- Avoid spray on snow because of harmful fumes
- Place wrapping paper in the garbage immediately after opening presents; dyes that are used can be toxic for small children who may play and chew on pieces
- Use care with heavy stockings on mantel to avoid being pulled down on a child's head

## **Learn Ladder Safety**

- ❑ Avoid slips and falls by learning the basic ladder safety rules that follow:
- ❑ Choose a place always away from power lines
- ❑ Place the ladder on level hard ground, and if appropriate, always open it all the way making sure all locking devices are fully in place
- ❑ Wear shoes with rubber soles
- ❑ Never stand above the second rung from the top
- ❑ Center your body on the ladder using your belt buckle as a guiding device.
- ❑ Be sure that lean angle of ladder is appropriate to avoid falling backwards

## **Safety Tips Around Your Home or Business for Visitors**

- ❑ Illuminate home entry area, sidewalks, front door for visitors; use motion detectors on floodlights outside
- ❑ Consider the needs of people with wheel-chair or walker that might visit
- ❑ Clear branches, shrubs that may have grown and blocked pathways, doors, and windows
- ❑ Be sure to shovel and salt walkways
- ❑ Be care to identify uneven surfaces such as single low steps from one room to another, or near entrance doors
- ❑ Make sure handrails are secure on stairways
- ❑ Fasten carpet edges and tuck cords under carpets and out of the way to avoid trips and falls
- ❑ Consider special needs of guests in bathroom areas and dining rooms or bedrooms
- ❑ Use non-skid mats and carpeting
- ❑ Avoid use of candles unless as a primary source of light and always use a safety device under candles to catch wax or if candle is tipped over

## **Safety Tips in selecting Toys**

- ❑ When choosing toys, think big and avoid small parts that could be a choking or swallowing hazard
- ❑ Stuffed animals should have eyes, noses, or other decorations that are securely attached.
- ❑ Do pay close attention to age recommendations on labels
- ❑ Buy batteries when necessary

## **Make Safety a Routine Part of Life:**

### **Some General Reminders**

- ❑ Always wear your seat belt in your (or any one else's) car and make sure others in the car do so as well
- ❑ Always use a safety seat for young children, properly installed
- ❑ Always cross streets at corners and with appropriate lights
- ❑ Teach children always to ask permission to pet a dog before doing so
- ❑ Have smoke detectors on every floor and near every room where someone sleeps

## **Review Emergency Information Lists:**

- ❑ Check your lists of emergency and routine contact phone numbers, cell phone numbers and people or organizations you would contact in an emergency. At the same time, determine if these same people and places have your updated contact information, such as employers, the Alarm Company, neighbors and friends.
- ❑ Post your emergency information by your phones and include your own home address and phone number (This helps babysitters and other who may be in the home such as visitors, and grandparents)
- ❑ Prepare your emergency preparedness plan and review with each family member
- ❑ Review what each family member should do in the case of the most likely emergencies
- ❑ Review with children what they should do in an emergency under various circumstances such as getting out of the house in a fire, calling 911 in an emergency.

## **Kitchen Safety**

- ❑ Turn off and unplug appliances when not in use
- ❑ Turn pot handles inward to avoid being knocked off the stove
- ❑ Supervise children while cooking
- ❑ Have fire extinguisher across the room from cook areas for quick access
- ❑ Have working smoke, fire and CO detectors - UL approved
- ❑ Have a fire escape plan; practice

# How to Avoid Becoming a Victim of a Crime

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## Some Safety Tips

### Preventing a Burglary

- ❑ Avoid openly displaying gifts that are visible from outside your home
- ❑ Provide occupancy clues, such as outdoor lighting, removing newspapers and mail daily, light timers when you are away, and sidewalks that are shoveled and salted
- ❑ Avoid hiding a key “outside the door”
- ❑ Secure sliding windows and doors from easy opening
- ❑ Don’t put your name on your mailbox; a burglar can get listed phone numbers, call and see whether anyone is home while sitting in front of your home
- ❑ Avoid descriptive telephone answering machine messages that tell people you are not home especially for extended periods of time
- ❑ Avoid piling up gift boxes from expensive gifts, especially electronics, on the street for garbage removal. Break them down and conceal descriptive information.
- ❑ Avoid the second burglary (after replacing stolen items)
- ❑ Review door and windows for dead-bolt locks, burglar proof door hinges, solid core doors, and secondary security devices such as oversize strike plates

### Avoiding Purse Snatching

- ❑ Always walk in well lit areas
- ❑ Keep a minimum amount of cash in purse
- ❑ Keep credit cards, larger amounts of currency and other valuables in coat pockets or inside pockets
- ❑ Straps from purses should not be wrapped around your neck, wrist or shoulder. If your purse is grabbed and strap does not break, you could be injured
- ❑ Never leave purse in shopping cart or on a store counter
- ❑ Carry a police whistle and a small flashlight on key ring for emergencies

# How to Avoid becoming a Victim of a Financial Crime

## How to Use an Automated Teller Machine Safely – Some Tips

- ❑ Try to use an ATM when other people are present such as in a shopping mall or store
- ❑ Be alert to unknown persons behind you; look around every few seconds
- ❑ If unsure or uneasy let other person go ahead of you
- ❑ Have access card and other papers ready when you approach the ATM
- ❑ Do not take purse or wallet with you if possible
- ❑ Protect your PIN number from being seen by shielding your transaction with your body; watch for camera cell phones
- ❑ Make sure when your transaction is finished and make sure you have your receipt and your cash
- ❑ Again, be cautious of anyone who makes you uncomfortable as you leave
- ❑ Walk away or drive away if your instincts tell you to do so
- ❑ Only use ATM machine in a well-lighted, open, high-traffic area

## Avoiding Computer Scams:

- ❑ NEVER e-mail your password, credit card number, secret word, or PIN, as e-mail is not encrypted and should not be considered 100% secure.
- ❑ Choose your passwords carefully and keep them safe. A web site only confirms that a password is correct, not the identity of the person using it.
- ❑ DO NOT provide personal information on a Web site unless you are sure the company with which you are interacting legitimately manages it.
- ❑ NEVER click on a link in e-mail that requests personal information, because criminals can redirect a link to an address other than the one shown. To visit a web site, always type the address directly into your Web browser.
- ❑ The safest way to update your account information is to go directly to the company's account maintenance Web site. Typically you can visit the company's home page and link to it from there

## Avoiding Identity Theft:

- ❑ Routinely shred paper before discarding any that contains any personal information, identification, or accounts.
- ❑ Use a cross cut shredder
- ❑ Shred credit card solicitations
- ❑ Use social security numbers only when absolutely necessary
- ❑ Avoid using electronic signatures when making a purchase; ask for an “off-line” charge slip”
- ❑ Do not print personal information on checks, such as drivers license, social security or PIN numbers

- ❑ Keep track of billing cycles of bills and watch for them monthly; identity thieves may try to redirect billing to another address
- ❑ Use caution when giving credit card information over the phone or Internet. Never give it to people who call you; try to verify by calling back
- ❑ Copy front and back of credit cards and keep phone numbers handy in case your wallet or purse is stolen with your cards in it.
- ❑ Avoid keeping anything in your wallet or purse with your Social Security number on it
- ❑ Inventory everything of value in your wallet, purse or briefcase and keep it at home or office; keep only the basic credit card, drivers license and small amount of cash
- ❑ File a police report if you lose your wallet or purse or are a victim of identity theft; it will come in handy later
- ❑ Get your credit report regularly to see if there are any irregularities on it
- ❑ Avoid telemarketing calls, no matter who they represent, asking for personal information; For example, there is a scam in which the caller purports to represent the IRS and sends you to a site asking for personal information
- ❑ Use credit cards instead of debit cards whenever possible; it is easier to recoup credit losses than money lost from your checking account if a scam is involved
- ❑ Watch for people using camera phones to snap photographs of credit card numbers while people are shopping or while using an ATM
- ❑ Change passwords and PIN numbers frequently where possible

# Safety Tips in a Car

## Protecting Yourself in a Public Parking Garage or Parking Lot

- ❑ Select a safe time to shop
- ❑ If you must leave a key, leave only the vehicle ignition key
- ❑ Do not leave any identifying information with name, address, phone numbers in the car or on the keys
- ❑ Scan the area you are in for loitering or “suspicious looking” people
- ❑ Be aware while you walk to and from your car and stores, and while loading packages and children in your car
- ❑ Do not turn your back and attention completely away from those nearby
- ❑ Lack of attention leads to purse-snatching and strong-arm robbery
- ❑ Do not park next to a van with a sliding door
- ❑ Change from heel shoes to comfortable walking shoes when possible; this will allow you to walk quickly or run from a dangerous situation
- ❑ Don’t leave alone after dark
- ❑ Have keys ready when you approach your car
- ❑ Be observant and look around before getting into your vehicle
- ❑ Before you open your car door, observe the interior, especially the back
- ❑ Keep doors locked and windows closed

## Safety Tips While Driving

- ❑ Be careful of anyone approaching your car while driving, such as a pedestrian or someone soliciting donations or passing out literature
- ❑ Avoid mace or similar products; they could be turned on you; use your police whistle to get attention and perhaps scare away an attacker
- ❑ When stopped at a traffic control device, leave space between yourself and car in front
- ❑ If struck behind in a crash, do not leave your vehicle. Notify police if you have a cell phone or let someone do it and remain in your vehicle
- ❑ If you believe you are being followed, drive to a well-lit area with lots of people

## Winter Car Safety Tips

- ❑ Get your car ready for winter season; check condition and repair or replace as necessary: fluids, hoses, belts, battery, wiper blades and tires. Lubricate locks and hinges, plugs and other ignition components.
- ❑ Keep the following items in your car during the winter:
  - Blanket
  - High-energy food
  - Flashlight with extra batteries
  - First aid kit
  - Small hand tool kit
  - Extra change of clothes
  - A sack of sand or kitty litter
  - Shovel
  - Windshield scraper
  - Tow Rope
  - Booster cables
  - Water container
  - Compass, road map
  - Red cloth to signal help

## Winter Safety Tips for Home:

- ❑ Know safe routes from home, school, work and major shopping areas during severe weather conditions
- ❑ Know how to contact all family members, neighbors and friends in case you need assistance because of inability to travel, return home, pick up family members or evacuate and get separated
- ❑ Know how to turn off gas, electricity and water if you need to evacuate your home
- ❑ Make sure that each member of household has a warm coat, gloves, hat and water-resistant boots
- ❑ Winterize your home, and other structure that may provide shelter for your family members and pets; repair roof leaks, install weather stripping and insulation as necessary and check roof's ability to support large amounts of weight from ice and snow
- ❑ Clean off accumulations of snow at sloped roof edges with appropriate roof shovel to prevent "ice damming"
- ❑ Always have plenty of batteries for flashlights, a weather radio and portable AM/FM radio. Have an emergency supply kit with at least a gallon of water for each person per day for three days, high energy food, canned food with a manual can opener, extra medicine, eyeglasses, change of clothes, and extra food for young children.
- ❑ Keep plywood, plastic sheeting, lumber and hand tools on hand and accessible