

**METROPOLITAN POLICE DEPARTMENT  
COMMUNITY SERVICES DIVISION  
CRIME PREVENTION SECTION**



**PREVENTION  
AND  
SAFETY TIPS**

**The Metropolitan Police Department has provided the following prevention and safety tips for the upcoming holiday season. We ask that you make copies and distribute out amongst your NHW members. Also, feel free to distribute the information to co-workers, families and friends as well.**

**Here are some non-emergency numbers that may be of assistance to you.**

<b>Central Sector</b>	862-7611
<b>East Sector</b>	862-7600
<b>Hermitage Sector</b>	880-1776
<b>South Sector</b>	862-7744
<b>West Sector</b>	862-7747
<b>Non Emergency Police</b>	862-8600
<b>Crime Stoppers</b>	742-7463
<b>Watch Your Car Program</b>	1-800-394-9342
<b>Domestic Violence</b>	880-3000
<b>Burglary Section</b>	862-7572
<b>Auto Theft</b>	862-7612
<b>Fraud Unit</b>	862-7594
<b>Central Records-(Police Reports)</b>	862-7631
<b>Drug Hotline</b>	244-DOPE (244-3673)

# **HOME BURGLARY PREVENTION TIPS**

**No home or neighborhood is immune, but these relatively easy precautions, when performed jointly, will deter most home burglars.**

**Don't** leave a "hidden key" outside under doormat, flowerpot, in a drain spout, over the door, etc.

**Don't** have your name and address on your keys unless you are willing to replace all locks if you lose your keys.

**Don't** grow hiding places by allowing windows/side bushes to grow too large.

**Don't** allow small valuables to be visible from the street or within arm's reach from outside window.

**Don't** allow strangers in who act as though they're lost, request a drink of water, or want to use the phone.

**DON'T** display your name on your mailbox. A thief needs only a phonebook to determine who answers and who is gone.

**Don't** leave a ladder outside.

**Don't** simply leave all of the lights on when you're gone...a dead giveaway. Use timers or have a neighbor assist.

**Don't** allow papers or mail to stack up in the mailbox or driveway.

**Don't** rely on clamshell window locks. They're uneven, don't fit, and easily jimmied with a knife.

**Don't** leave valuables in obvious places: nightstands, chest of drawers, desks, closets, etc. Be creative.

**Don't** leave packing materials from valuable purchases out on the curb or in the alley. Break down containers and dispose of discretely.

**Don't** buy items off the street from someone whose character you can't vouch for. You may be receiving stolen property and adding to the burglary problem.

**Don't** deliberately confront a burglar. There may be more than one; they may be on drugs, and you might frighten them into a confrontation when most go to great lengths to avoid conflict.

## **HOME BURGLARY PREVENTION TIPS (cont.)**

**Do** watch your neighbor's property and note suspicious persons and vehicles. Notify the Metro Police at 862-8600 and give a description: location, number of suspects, race, age, clothing, vehicle description and tag number. If it's a burglary in progress, call 911. Keep watching and stay on the line.

**Do** strengthen all doors and locks – solid core or metal doors and dead bolt locks, little or no glass, and the door jam should be as solid as the door. Consider that two deadbolts spread the force of a blow.

**Do** install a wide-angle peephole to inspect visitors.

**Do** change tumblers if you lend keys and lose track of them.

**Do** lock or bolt windows. Approximately 25% of burglars enter this way. Most won't break the glass.

**Do** install locks on sliding glass doors to prevent door from being lifted out of the track.

**Do** secure window-mounted air conditioners so they're not easily removed or pushed in.

**Do** secure garages and basement windows – consider a metal grill.

**Do** deactivate garage door openers when gone for extended periods of time.

**Do** consider outside lighting with infrared sensors. Floodlights are best.

**Do** lock up when at home, when cutting the grass or gardening. Burglars drive around looking for this opportunity and just walk inside.

**Do** use care with wedding and funeral announcements.

**Do** consider a dog – the larger the better. Use “Beware of Dog” signs. (Keep vacuum cleaner in obscure location, as thieves can run a dog into a bedroom if the dog fears the vacuum cleaner.)

**Do** mark and photograph/video valuables and keep a home inventory record with brand names, model numbers, serial numbers and other owner applied markings or distinguishing characteristics.

**Do** consider lawn care and house sitters while on vacation.

**Do** consider safes, either hidden or large, heavy gun safes.

**Do** consider a professionally installed and monitored alarm system with stickers and an audible alarm.

## **AUTO THEFT PREVENTION TIPS**

**Never** leave keys in your ignition.

**Never** leave an unattended car running.

**Always** lock your doors.

**Keep** windows rolled up.

**Do not** leave items inside your car, put them in the trunk.

Park in busy, **well-lit** areas.

**Keep copies of your car's registration, if your car is stolen, the police will need this to make a report.**

## **TRAVEL SAFETY**

**The holiday season is here and many of us will be heading out of the house and hitting the roadways to visit families and friends! Before you jump into your car to start your anticipated adventure you should be aware of some travelling safety tips:**

**Always** be aware of your surroundings when traveling.

Remember to bring a **fully charged** cell phone on the roadway.

If being followed, **drive to a hospital, fire-hall, 24 hr. market, police station, or any public location.**

Travel **well-lit**, busy streets.

Travel **with** someone.

**Always** lock doors immediately when entering your vehicle.

If you break down, use your **cell phone** to call for help.

Be familiar with changing a flat tire...at minimum have **all** tools necessary.

**Let** someone know your route and travel times/locations.

If possible, **don't** carry valuables or large amounts of cash...credit cards or travelers checks are best.

## **SHOPPING TIPS**

**Christmas is a time of year during which many of us will be busy shopping and running errands in order to be ready for the Holiday Celebration. We must not forget that criminals will also be out and about looking for easy targets to make a big score. Here are some simple tips that can reduce your chances of becoming a victim of crime:**

In parking lots, **always** be aware of your surroundings

**Don't** display large sums of cash. Whenever possible use credit cards and checks.

**Always** have your car keys in your hand when walking in parking areas.

When possible, **shop with a friend or spouse**.

**Don't** be ashamed to ask for a security escort to your vehicle.

**Never** leave valuables in plain view inside your vehicle. This is what many criminals look for, an easy target.

**Always** scan the parking lot for suspicious persons or vehicles **before** you park and exit your vehicle.

Report **all** suspicious persons and vehicles to mall security/Metro Police immediately.

**Don't** display gifts under your tree from a front window of your home. Although this looks pretty, it can be attractive to would-be thieves.

## **SCAMS**

**During the holidays many criminals prey upon our free spirited joyous giving. Beware if someone approaches you and requests money for donations or sponsorships, please verify that the organization is legitimate before giving cash or checks. Although there are hundreds of legitimate charities we all need to be cautious. Here are some tips in checking for legitimate charities:**

[www.state.tn.us/sos/charity](http://www.state.tn.us/sos/charity)

[www.ecfa.org](http://www.ecfa.org)

[www.guidestar.org](http://www.guidestar.org)

[www.middletennessee.bbb.org](http://www.middletennessee.bbb.org)

The secretary of state's hot line for reporting suspicious charitable solicitations: 1-800-861-7393.

## **Are You a Candidate for Identity Theft?**

- \_\_\_\_\_ (5) I receive several offers for pre-approved credit cards every week.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (10) I carry my Social Security Card in my wallet.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (5) I do not have a P.O. Box or a secure mailbox.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (10) I carry my military ID in my wallet at all times.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (10) I do not shred or tear banking and credit information when I throw it in the trash.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (20) I provide my SSN whenever asked, and do not ask questions about how that information will be safeguarded.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (10) My drivers license still uses my social security number as the license number.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (5) I am required to use my SSN at work as an employee number.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (20) I have my SSN printed on my personal checks.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (5) I am listed in a "Who's Who" guide.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (5) A relative of mine has our family genealogy listed on an accessible web site that shows my date of birth, mother's maiden name and other information for anyone to access.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (10) I carry my health insurance card in my wallet and my SSN is my ID number.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (20) I have not ordered a copy of my credit report in over three years.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (10) I am a student and my SSN is my student ID number on campus.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (10) I do not believe people would peruse my trash looking for credit or financial information about me, or members of my family.

## **Are You a Candidate for Identity Theft? (cont.)**

### **How did you score?**

**100 points or more:** You are in serious danger of becoming a victim of identity theft. You are four times more likely than the average consumer of becoming a victim.

**50-99 Points:** Your likelihood of being victimized is about average, higher if you have excellent credit.

**25-49 Points:** Congratulations! You are at a low risk of being a victim of identity theft. Nevertheless, continue to make improvements to lower your risk.

**Less than 25 Points:** Your Crime Prevention IQ is in the genius range. Pass this test along to someone else who needs it more than you do. However, do what you can to get the point factor to 5 or less if you can.

### **How do thieves steal my identity?**

There are several ways to have your identity stolen and used fraudulently. A thief can steal your wallet or purse and use the information inside to steal your ID. Mail theft is common especially around the first and middle of the months when people mail their bills. Bank Statements, Credit Card Statements, Utility Bills, and IRS Tax information are all good sources to get information needed to steal someone's identity.

How many of you think about using your spare time to dive through someone else's trash? Well thieves do this quite often. They will retrieve any information they can find intact to use in identity theft. **BUY A SHREDDER and USE IT!!!** Shred those important documents and bill stubs you do not plan to keep. Be careful when discarding old checks or the deposit slips in the back of your checkbook. Often people just throw these items away without realizing the consequences of their actions. Those deposit slips contain the same information as the actual check. With computer programs available to print checks, you can bet your account will become "overdrawn".

Some of these thieves are crafty. They will make a telephone call and pose as your landlord or employer to fraudulently obtain information about you that they can use. This is why it is important to advise your bank and credit card company not to release personal information over the phone. Some thieves may obtain your information from your workplace or buy it from someone with inside access to your personal information and is why you should check your credit report at least once a year.

### **How do I reduce my risk of being a victim of Identity Theft?**

1. Obtain a copy of your credit report at least once a year.
2. Remove your Social Security Number from your Driver's License.
3. Do not put your SSN or DI numbers on your checks.
4. Carry your checkbook, ATM Card, and Credit Cards when you need them. Have numbers ready to cancel the cards should they become lost or stolen.

# SEASONS GREETINGS

FROM ALL OF US AT THE  
METROPOLITAN POLICE DEPARTMENT  
COMMUNITY SERVICE'S DIVISION



HAVE A SAFE AND JOYOUS HOLIDAY SEASON!