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| **Holiday Season**  **Crime Prevention Tips** |
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The holiday shopping season is a peak time for crimes such as home and vehicle burglaries, and thefts. Residents need to be alert, aware, and prepared in order to reduce the risk of becoming a crime victim at home, on the road, and while shopping. Crooks know that homes become mini-goldmines as families begin to store holiday gifts. The items most desired by burglars and thieves are also those most desired by intended gift recipients. Small electronics such as phones, tablets, laptops, digital music players, game consoles and various jewelry items will be stored in most homes in December.

Residents can better protect their homes by locking doors and windows at all times, and by not displaying gifts and other valuables where they can be seen from a window or a doorway. Store small electronics and jewelry in a safe or in a place that is not conspicuous.

When not at home, always activate your alarm and turn on a radio or television so the house looks occupied. If you go out of town for the holiday, use an automatic timer for your lights and ask a neighbor or trusted friend to watch your house, pick up the mail and newspapers and park their car in your driveway from time to time.

After the gifts are opened, try not to advertise your new electronics and/or other new valuables by putting empty product boxes out on the curb for the garbage collectors. Break the boxes down and fold/cut them so they could fit in a closed trash container. While shopping, stay alert to your surroundings and the people around you. Make sure you have your checkbook, wallet, identification card and credit cards secured after every transaction. Sometimes people get so excited about a purchase, they forget to collect these items from the register counter. If you notice any item missing, contact your bank or credit card company immediately to stop any account activity, then contact the police department.

Coordinate shopping trips with a friend if you plan to be out late. Never park your car in an unlit area, no matter how convenient it is. Crooks know that cars parked in shopping centers are likely to contain valuables. Lock your car doors and windows even if you are only gone for a few minutes and NEVER leave shopping bags, purses, backpacks, or any items of value visible through your car windows. Crooks usually walk from car to car in parking lots, looking for any visible valuables. When they see something they want, they will break the window (they use tools to make that quick and quiet) and take the valuables. Lock item in the trunk, or keep the items with you as you go from store to store.

Follow the above tips and help us reduce crime in our community. Have a safe and joyful holiday season – from the men and women of the Laguna Niguel Police Services.