

Holiday & Winter Safety Tips from Safe & Sound

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Safety Out and About

-  Be aware of your surroundings... If you feel you are being followed, drive to a police station. Try not to walk alone, especially at night, and make phone calls before or after you reach your destination so you aren't distracted.
-  If you are waiting for a bus or walking at night, keep your cell phone and valuables under wraps, so you don't attract pickpockets.
-  Do not leave valuables on display in your car. It takes just seconds to smash a car window.
-  Shopping with kids? Teach them to go to a store clerk or security guard if you get separated.
-  Carry your purse close to your body, not dangling by the straps. Keep your wallet inside your coat or in your front trouser pocket.
-  When on the go, put your hoodie down so you can see people from all angles and take out your headphones so you are alert to danger.
-  Cars left running, unlocked and unattended are quick and easy targets for thieves.
-  Making a list, checking it twice! Leave a list of all credit cards at home just in case they are lost or stolen.
-  Resist the urge to announce your vacations or out of town schedule... friends might like it, but so do robbers.
-  Don't forget to arm your security system – this simple step will go a long way to protect your home.
-  Have your keys in hand when approaching your vehicle. Check your backseat, around your car and the surrounding parking lot before getting into your vehicle.
-  In case of severe weather or a vehicle breakdown, stock your trunk with a few emergency items: blankets, snacks, water, kitty litter/sand (traction), emergency flares/road markers, ice scraper, jumper cables, tire jack

Safety At Home

-  Make sure you have an identifying code on all of your valuables!
-  When traveling for the holidays, ask your neighbor to watch your home.
-  To prevent a break-in while you are away, keep a light or television on or Christmas lights lit and on timers to make it look like someone is home.
-  Always turn off indoor holiday lights when you are leaving the house for an extended period or put them on a timer to prevent fires.
-  Never connect more than one extension cord together; instead use a single cord that is long enough to reach the outlet without stretching, but not so long that it can get easily tangled.

-  Use an outdoor timer certified by CSA International to switch lights on and off. Lights should be turned on after 7 p.m. to avoid the electricity rush hour.
-  Close your curtains. Criminals are also interested in your holiday packages and goodies under the tree.
-  Make sure you place your keys in a hidden location and not on display visible through a window or door.
-  When outdoors shoveling, lock your house! You might be out in back as someone is entering your front door.
-  Do not throw out your large electronic boxes by the trash. You are simply alerting burglars to your new large screen TV and computers. Better to break them down and throw the cardboard in recycling.
-  Carbon monoxide does not have an odor and is extremely dangerous... Never use a generator, grill, camp stove or other gasoline, propane, natural gas or charcoal burning devices inside a home, garage, basement, crawlspace or any partially enclosed area. For more winter preparation info: <http://m.fema.gov/before-winter-storms-extreme-cold>
-  We know it's getting cold...keep portable heaters at least 3 ft. away from all combustible materials, including paper, bedding, furniture & curtains. Never use your heater to dry clothing or shoes. Make sure you turn the heaters off before leaving your home or going to bed.
-  Keep lighters and matches out of the kids' reach and make the lighters child resistant.
-  Keep holiday plants such as mistletoe, holly berries, and Christmas cactus away from children and pets because they may be poisonous if ingested.
-  Don't leave any food out at room temperature for more than two hours.
-  Check the batteries in your fire and carbon monoxide detectors and be sure you have one installed on every level of your home – there are inexpensive dual smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Carbon monoxide does not have an odor and can kill in minutes.
-  Have a fire extinguisher in your home and ideally one for each level. It is especially important near ovens and fireplaces.
-  For emergencies, put a fire ladder on the second floor in case your stairway or exit is blocked or on fire.
-  Create a family fire/emergency safety and exit plan and communicate it with all members of the household...especially children.
-  Have your chimney cleaned if you plan to use your fireplace. If the stack is dirty or blocked, the smoke can come back in the home and cause harm.
-  If you smell a gas odor, call 9-1-1 or WE Energies to investigate. Get out of your home immediately and find another location to stay while you wait for help.
-  Always look out before the door to be sure you know the person or feel comfortable answering it. Don't open it if you don't feel comfortable or have an uneasy feeling. Always ask for identification for anyone you are unsure of and don't let unexpected "sales or service people" into your home.
-  Install a motion detector light in poorly lit areas of your home including porches, garages and side entrances. There are inexpensive lightbulbs that have motion detecting capabilities without having to rewire anything.
-  Have packages delivered to your place of work or request a signature at delivery to prevent items from being stolen off the porch.
-  Put salt or sand down on walk and driveways, especially in areas where water pools and freezes to prevent slips and falls. Shovel when it snows.
-  Take hoses off outdoor spouts and, if possible, shut off water to pipes leading to the outside of the home. Otherwise, make sure all spouts are turned off and not dripping to prevent damage.

-  When travelling, turn your thermostat down to 55 degrees to save energy, but leave a faucet on a very slight drip and open the cupboard beneath sinks to prevent pipes from freezing while you are away.
-  Report leaking fire hydrants and shovel around them if the snow starts to cover them.
-  Look out for elderly neighbors and help by salting their walks or shoveling.

Enjoying the Outdoors Safely

-  When sledding, check the path for trees, fencing, cars, curbs, fire hydrants, large rocks and other obstacles. Look out for others at the bottom of the hill. Keep especially small children in less crowded areas to avoid collisions with other sledders.
-  Wear proper winter coats, mittens/gloves, hats, boots, socks and snowsuits and/or layer well if outdoors for an extended period. Purchase waterproof/resistant gear for extra protection. Hypothermia is possible even at cold and even cool temperatures. Warning signs/symptoms of hypothermia: Adults: shivering, exhaustion confusion, fumbling hands, memory loss, slurred speech, drowsiness Children: bright red, cold skin, very low energy For more info: <http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/staysafe/hypothermia.asp>
-  If hiking or snowshoeing in remote areas, leave an itinerary with someone and establish a plan if you don't return or check in at the expected time.
-  For more on outdoor safety: <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/duringstorm/outdoorsafety.asp>

Online Safety

-  Be sure your computer software up to date to date to keep personal information secure.
-  Stay safe in cyberspace. . . When shopping online, only use sites beginning with HTTPS:// - the "S" means the site has extra security or look for the padlock icon to the right of the search bar.
-  Recently, a scam using "FBI" in the automatic recorded message indicates that a "free" security system – this is a scam.
-  Never give out personal information to people or business that you don't trust. Once your information is in the hands of criminals, it is susceptible to fraud and theft. And always research unsolicited calls or emails advertising free products, services or gift cards especially if they sound too good to be true.
-  Be cautious of e-card scams. It might say it is coming from "Mom", but sometimes it is fake and there are links that will contain malicious code (aka viruses, Trojan horses, etc.) Also, look out for other types of Phishing/Smishig emails that have conversational headings like "Hey, check this out" but contain links or attachments that, if downloaded, can steal personal information from your computer.
-  Social media "mal"advertisements are a popular way for scammers to hack private data when you click on the links. If you are interested in the product or service, try researching it first.

For all emergencies call 9-1-1. (All life threatening situations, all suspected crimes in process.)

For Non-emergencies – dial 933-4444 (to speak to tele-communicator and have call recorded press 9; no need to listen to other menu options.)