



# HOLIDAY SHOPPING SAFETY

The winter holiday season is a popular time of the year for shopping, with consumers nationwide spending on average close to \$1,000 on gifts, holiday decorations or food (and more), according to the National Retail Federation. During this time of substantial spending, Hoosiers should follow the tips below to protect themselves and their property.

## QUICK TIPS

- Do not leave packages visible in a vehicle, and consider locking them in the trunk.
- Contact store security or police if you notice suspicious activity, including a person loitering around your vehicle.
- If a fire alarm sounds, leave your shopping carts and bags and evacuate the building immediately. No bargain is worth ignoring a fire alarm.
- Make sure your Internet connection is secure when shopping online. Before you give your payment information, check for indicators that security software is in place.

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## HOLIDAY SHOPPING TIPS

### STORE SHOPPING

While looking for great deals during the holiday season, be aware of criminals looking to get your things for free.

- Make a plan ahead of time with children in the event that they become separated in a store, including teaching them to seek help from store employees or security officers.
- Park in a well-lit area. When you get out of your vehicle, look around and see if anything looks suspicious or out of place, and be sure to lock your vehicle.
- Do not leave packages visible in a vehicle, and consider locking them in the trunk.
- Keep your wallet inside a coat or front pants pocket, and hold a purse close to the body.
- Do not use public Wi-Fi while shopping. Cyber thieves can intercept your device's signal and collect personal data and payment information. If using public Wi-Fi, consider installing a VPN to create a secured connection.

- When walking between the store and parking lot, have keys in hand as you approach the vehicle, and check the back seat and around the vehicle before getting inside.
- Contact store security or police if you notice suspicious activity, including a person loitering around your vehicle.

Find more shopping safety tips from the Indiana State Police.

## ONLINE SHOPPING

Sixty percent of consumers plan to shop online during the winter holiday season. Online shoppers should follow these tips to help guard their personal and financial data.

### *Holiday Email Precautions*

- Email advertising and spam traffic may increase during the holiday season. If the subject of an email from a known or unknown sender seems suspicious, delete the email without opening it. If an advertisement or other offer sounds too good to be true, it may be. Check it out through a reliable source.
- Never open email attachments or follow embedded links from senders you do not know.
- Never convey personal information, such as credit card numbers, bank account numbers, Social Security numbers, passwords, etc., in emails.

### *Online Shopping*

- Keep any virus protection or other computer security software updated on the device you intend to use for online shopping.
- Make sure your Internet connection is secure. Before you give your payment information, check for indicators that security software is in place.
- Create complex passwords to safeguard personal information like credit card numbers and billing addresses. Use a combination of uppercase and lowercase letters, numbers and special characters (&, ^, %). Consider using multi-factor authentication.
- Avoid visiting unknown websites. Malicious software could be downloaded, so stick to shopping only well-known, reputable sites and verify that the website URL begins with "https" and has a padlock symbol by it.

### *Safe Online Purchasing*

- When making online purchases with a credit or debit card, use a secure online escrow broker to provide payment.
- If available, consider using your bank's virtual credit card service. Virtual credit cards can only be used once and usually expire in 24 hours.
- Make sure you print or save a hard copy of every transaction receipt in case there is confusion later about payment.

## RETAIL FIRE SAFETY

Retail outlets are often crowded with merchandise and people during the holiday shopping season. Make sure you know how to get out of every building you visit in case there is a fire.

- Be aware of your surroundings in any store or building, and know where the exits are located. Periodically, take a moment to reorient yourself to these exits while you are shopping.
- Notify building security or another employee if you notice exits that are blocked with merchandise, displays or other items.

- If a fire alarm sounds, leave your shopping carts and bags and evacuate the building immediately. No bargain is worth ignoring a fire alarm.
- Retail store owners and employees should be aware of building occupancy limits and attentive to potential overcrowding. If you think a building may be filled past capacity, notify a store employee or consider returning to that store later.
- If retailers are closely monitoring occupancy levels, they may ask customers to wait before entering the store until another patron exits to avoid exceeding building capacity. Please follow these directions or consider returning to the store when it is less crowded.