

MONTH ISSUE  
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## Holiday Alert



A Consumer Update from Mat Heck, Jr., Prosecuting Attorney



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### Things to Consider This Holiday Season

Now that the holiday season is here, it is important to take precautions to keep you safe and avoid becoming a victim of a crime or an accident in your home. Unfortunately burglaries, thefts, robberies, and muggings are more common this time of year than normal.

Here are some tips to keep you and your family safe at home:

- Lock your doors and windows
- Do not display gifts or valuables where they can be seen

- When you leave your house, leave lights, TV, or radio on so the house looks occupied
- Get an automatic timer for your lights if you go out of town so that lights are not always on
- Have someone pick up your mail and newspapers for you if you go out of town
- When setting up a Christmas tree make sure it is mounted on a sturdy base
- When putting lights on the tree make sure the wiring is not damaged, to avoid a fire
- Be aware that criminals sometimes pose as couriers delivering gifts
- Be aware of persons asking for donations at your door, they may be imposters seeking to take advantage of your generosity
- If anyone comes to your door ask for identification
- When hosting a holiday party find alternate transportation for intoxicated guests
- Arrange for an official designated driver
- When attending a party make sure you eat before consuming alcohol
- Know your limit
- Never drink and drive

Here are some tips to keep you and your family safe while shopping:

- Stay alert to your surroundings and avoid areas where there are people loitering outside of stores or parking garages
- Try to do your shopping in the day time or with another adult
- If you do shop at night, park in a well lighted area
- Avoid parking next to vans, trucks, or cars with tinted windows
- Never leave your car unoccupied with the motor running
- Do not approach your car alone if there are suspicious people in the area
- Always lock your car
- Avoid driving alone at night
- Have your keys in your hand when returning to your car
- Avoid carrying a lot of cash, use checks and credit cards when possible
- Carry your purse under your arm with the strap across your body
- Avoid overloading yourself with packages
- Keep your wallet in an inside jacket pocket
- Teach children to stay close to you when shopping
- Tell children to go to a store clerk or security guard if they get lost or separated from you
- Never let children go to the bathroom or to the car by themselves
- Make sure children know their full name, address, and phone number
- When using an ATM choose one that is inside a safe building, mall, or well lighted location
- Withdraw only the amount of cash you need
- Do not throw your ATM receipt away at the ATM location
- Notify the credit card company immediately if your credit card is lost or stolen
- Be aware of strangers approaching you for any reason

You can never be too careful or prepared. Share this information with your family, friends, and neighbors.

The above ALERT is part of the Montgomery County Prosecuting Attorney's initiative to help citizens become aware of ways they can avoid becoming a victim, or ways they can help stop criminal activity that may be occurring. Upon request, the office can provide presentations on crime prevention actions and activities to halt crime and increase the quality of life in our community.

If you would like additional information on the above ALERT, or would like additional information regarding our programs to assist consumers in general and/or seniors in particular, please contact Kimberly Oliver, Supervising Attorney, Adult Protection Unit, or Ward Barrentine, Supervising Attorney, Fraud and Economic Crimes Unit at 937-225-5757.

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