

Holiday tips

Here's how to combat crime

With the increase in shopping and away-from-home social obligations for holiday-minded individuals, reported thefts and burglaries are also known to rise.

It's the time of year when people carry more money, wear new jewelry, have auto trunks filled with valuable purchases or a house full of new gifts, many still in their original containers.

Individuals are frequently gone from the home to shop, visit friends and family, or vacation. Generally, those same people are so preoccupied with their busy schedules that they become less observant and suspicious of activities that go on around them, making them more vulnerable to theft and other crimes.

Shopping centers have anticipated and responded to increases in purse-snatching and auto theft incidents, and local police departments have geared up for the expected rise in burglary and robbery reports.

Farmington Hills and surrounding communities have already experienced these seasonally related crimes against people and their property. For example, in a one-square-mile residential section in Farmington Hills, which is normally a low incident area, burglaries during October and November of this year have doubled the year-to-date total of those crimes reported previously in that area.

And, while Farmington Hills has not experienced the usual seasonal increase in armed robberies, statistics



crime watch

Chris Cogar

crime prevention technician,
Farmington Hills Police Department

tics tend to show a slight rise in crimes against persons during the holiday period. In four recent incidents, shoppers (the majority elderly females) have been followed home and robbed of purses and belongings as they get out of their cars, or while in their residence after they failed to lock their doors upon entry.

Psychologically, burglars and robbers may be more inclined to strike out at this time of year because they feel depressed and less fortunate. Also, the economic benefits derived from their thieving is generally greater during this season, especially in the more affluent sections of the suburbs.

TO INSURE that you fully enjoy the holiday season and all that it has to offer, the following precautions should make you and your family less vulnerable to crimes that could be made against you:

• **PROTECT YOUR HOME AND POSSESSIONS** — Make it difficult for the burglar to enter your residence by locking all windows and doors even when you are at home. Increase your security lighting both outside and inside your home by installing timers. Outdoor fixtures should operate from dusk to dawn and inside lights should give the impression that you are home even during your absence. Keep valuable items, such as TVs, VCRs, microwave, cameras or stereo equipment, away from windows where they can be seen from the outside. Never accumulate large sums of cash in the home and secure expensive articles or jewelry in a safety deposit box. Hide these items you do keep at home in a location that is not obvious. Don't advertise your expensive new purchases by placing empty, marked merchandise boxes at the front curb for garbage pickup.

• **EXERCISE CAUTION WHILE DRIVING AND SHOPPING** — Always lock your car doors even when you drive. Park your vehicle in well-lit areas and refrain from doing all your shopping in one trip. If it means that you will be over loaded with purchases upon your return to your car. Be particularly conscious of your purse, or wallet, while in a crowd. To avoid carrying valuables of any kind in outside pockets. Carry only as much money as you need and always leave unnecessary

credit cards and expensive jewelry safely at home. Be careful of anyone following you while shopping, walking to your car and arriving home. If you observe a suspicious person or activity, don't hesitate to make mental or written notes of the person(s) or vehicle(s) and immediately contact security personnel or call the police. Upon returning to your car, always check the backseat before you get in. To protect any purchases you leave in your vehicle, place all packages out of sight or lock them in the trunk. If you drive a station wagon, hatchback or van, arrange to cover your purchases.

• **DON'T TAKE UNNECESSARY CHANCES**. When banking after hours at an automatic teller machine, look around for suspicious people or vehicles before you get out of your car. If you see anything that makes you feel uncomfortable, leave and do your banking at another time. If a stranger approaches you and states that he has a weapon, believe him. Injuries from robbers and purse snatchers usually result only when you resist so give up any valuable items they may demand. Be calm, attentive and avoid provoking your assailant — your life and safety are more precious than your packages, wallet or purse.

CRIMINALS LOOK for their victims where the opportunities are greater just as holiday buyers shop for their families and friends. As one thief was questioned by a Farmington Hills detective as to why he chose to target a particular community, he responded, "When you want to go grocery shopping, wouldn't you want to go to the best supermarket?"

For police to be effective in catching these thieves, residents should be mindful of their surroundings and the people around them. Law enforcement personnel need alert and careful citizens who don't hesitate to report any suspicious activity they observe.

Remember, the person who rang your bell and asked for directions, or the car you noticed cruising by your house, may be just the lead the police are seeking to solve a burglary or robbery, which recently occurred. With caution and concern, you can reduce many opportunities a criminal is looking for to attempt a crime against you, your family or your neighbors.

Keep mailbox snow cleared

Farmington Postmaster Kenneth Harris reminds all customers that postal regulations regarding delivery of mail on mounted routes require customers to keep the approach to their mailbox cleared of snow.

This will permit the carrier to drive up to the mailbox to deposit and to collect mail without leaving his vehicle. The approach to the mailbox should be cleared sufficiently on both sides to allow the carrier to drive ahead and not be required to back up his vehicle after delivery.

Failure to open approaches to boxes promptly after heavy snow may temporarily prevent carriers from making deliveries. Harris said postal regulations also require that walks, steps and porches be kept cleared of snow and ice.

Cooperation in these matters during the winter season will be appreciated, Harris said.

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CITY OF FARMINGTON NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

THE PLANNING COMMISSION of the City of Farmington will hold a PUBLIC HEARING on MONDAY, January 12, 1987, at 8:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 23500 Liberty Street, Farmington, Michigan, for the purpose of receiving oral and written comment on a proposed amendment to the Farmington City Zoning Ordinance.

The Ordinance, if adopted, would allow the Planning Commission to reduce the setback requirements of the R-6 Cluster Housing District Zoning Ordinance, where the size, shape, or other characteristics of a parcel require relief from the regulations of the R-6 Cluster Housing District. A complete copy of the proposed ordinance is on file in the Office of the City Clerk.

All interested persons will be given an opportunity to express their views at the above time and place. Any additional information desired regarding the above is available at the Office of the City Clerk.

JOSEPHINE M. BUSHY
City Clerk

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