

Crime Prevention News - December 2020

Holiday Safety Tips

As we embrace the holiday spirit, it is important to remember that not everyone shares our merriment. There are Grinches lurking about, ready to swoop in and steal your joy. Don't let that happen to you. Follow these simple crime prevention tips below to make it harder for an opportunistic thief to ruin your holiday.



1. Don't shop 'til you drop:

- Stay alert and be aware of what is going on around you.
- Park your car in a well-lit area; close the windows and lock the door.
- Don't leave packages and boxes visible through car windows. Lock them in the trunk or take them directly home.
- Don't carry large amounts of cash. Pay with checks, debit, or credit cards whenever possible.
- Don't get overburdened with packages; always keep one hand free. Don't leave your packages unattended; thieves are always looking for unattended packages and shopping bags.
- Keep your purse close to your body, not dangling loosely. Put your wallet in your front pants pocket or in an inside coat pocket.

2. When shopping online, use common sense to protect against fraud or ID theft:

- Familiarize yourself with the rules and policies of online stores and auction sites.
- Only shop with companies you know and make sure that the sites comply with industry security standards.
- Keep your personal information private and keep your passwords secure. Do not respond to requests for a password or credit card information unless you initiate the transaction.
- If you're not going to be home to accept the delivery package, delivery providers offer alternatives that prevent your packages from being left unattended. Lockboxes and secure alternative retail locations are just a couple of options. Visit your courier's website for more details.

3. Don't make your office a target for crooks looking for extra holiday cash:

- Do not leave gifts lying around an empty office. Secure them in a safe place or lock your office door if possible.
- Always keep your keys and wallet with you. Secure purses and other valuables in a locked drawer or cabinet.
- Don't be embarrassed to challenge an unfamiliar face in the office.
- Remember If you see something say something, call Public Safety immediately **212-854-5555 (MS Campus)**, **212-305-7979 (Medical Center)** and **212-853-3333 (MV Campus)** to report suspicious activity or persons.
- Secure your office when stepping out, even for a minute.

**For students going home for the holidays : Please make sure to secure your room doors and windows.
Columbia University Public Safety wishes you & your family a happy & safe holiday season!**

Tips for Avoiding COVID-19 Scams

Beware of Robocalls, Texts and Emails Promising COVID-19 Cures or Stimulus Payments

- Do not respond to calls or texts from unknown numbers, or any others that appear suspicious.
- Never share your personal or financial information via email, text messages, or over the phone.
- Be cautious if you're being pressured to share any information or make a payment immediately.
- Scammers often [spooof phone numbers](#) to trick you into answering or responding. Remember that government agencies will never call you to ask for personal information or money.
- Do not click any links in a text message. If a friend sends you a text with a suspicious link that seems out of character, call them to make sure they weren't hacked. Always check on a charity (for example, by calling or looking at its actual website) ([Learn more about charity scams.](#))





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Does Your Wallet Look Like This? Minimize the Items in Your Wallet

Do you carry everything in your wallet? Imagine if you ever lost it? What did you have in it...important papers, credit cards, social security card, Drivers license, ID, etc.

The time it's going to take to deactivate your credit cards, make a Police report, etc, It's not worth it. Carry only the card(s) you are going to use. Yes, carry ID but leave your important papers at home in a safe location.

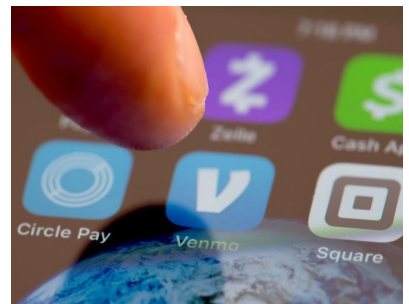
You can also limit the amount of credit / debit cards you carry by using smart phone features / APPS like Apple and Android Pay, Google Pay, Zelle, Venmo, etc. Read all about the cool and convenient ways you can pay by using them, **but make sure you activate the security features.**



Mobile Payment Apps

Mobile payment apps can be a convenient way to send and receive money with your smartphone. These apps have become very popular and scammers may try to use them to steal your money. Find out how mobile payment apps work, activating the security features and how to avoid sending money to a scammer:

<https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/.../mobile-payment-apps-how...>



Crime Prevention Stocking Stuffers Available at Public Safety!

Looking for a gift for that special someone? Public Safety has some great stocking stuffers available at discounted prices! Please see link for locks available and where to purchase by appointment: https://publicsafety.columbia.edu/.../DPS_Bike_Locks-2019...

We accept debit / credit cards. For more information and appointment, please email us at: ps-crimeprevention@columbia.edu.



Current Crime Information & Trends from the N.Y.P.D.

Every N.Y.P.D precinct has a twitter feed containing important information. You can access this information for the various Columbia areas as follows:

- @NYPD24pct** Covers south of West 110 Street
- @NYPD26Pct** Covers the Morningside and Manhattanville Campuses
- @NYPD33pct** Covers the CUIMC Campus
- @NYPD34pct** Covers the Baker Field Sports Complex

