



Holiday Safety

When you travel, know where you are going and how to get there and back. Check for construction detours. For longer trips, get a weather forecast.

If traveling out-of-state, most state law enforcement agencies provide road and highway information. Check to see what the conditions are before leaving. Inform a family member where you will be, when to expect you back, and give them your route if they don't know it.

Travel and conduct your business during daylight hours if possible. Lock doors and windows when getting into your car and keep them locked while driving.

If you have access to a cellular telephone, carry or take it. If possible, know the emergency cell codes for the area in which you are traveling.

When driving, keep doors locked and windows rolled up. Maintain at least half a tank of fuel, and keep vehicle in good repair.

If you experience a breakdown, pull as far onto the shoulder as possible and turn your emergency flashers on. If you have a cellular phone, summon assistance from a reputable source or call for law enforcement support. Otherwise, raise your hood or tie a streamer to your antenna, and await help inside your locked vehicle.

If a stranger stops, speak to them through a partially rolled-down window, and ask them to go to a phone and call police or a tow service; do not exit your vehicle until a law enforcement officer or tow operator are at your location. On longer trips, be sure you have water, food, and blankets in the vehicle.

If involved in a property-damage collision in an unfamiliar or potentially unsafe location, do not open or exit your vehicle. If you have a cellular telephone, summon law enforcement. If not, acknowledge the accident by hand signal, and motion the other driver to proceed with you to a safe location (where there are other people and light) to exchange information. If unable to proceed, honk the horn to attract attention and ask a passer-by to summon police.

If signaled to stop by any vehicle other than a clearly marked law enforcement unit, acknowledge the signal, and wave the driver to follow you to a safe location (where there are other people and light). Drive within the speed limit and take the shortest possible route to the nearest safe place. If you have a cellular phone, dial 9-1-1, tell the call-taker you are being followed by an unmarked vehicle attempting to stop you, and ask them to send a marked law enforcement vehicle to your location.

When parking, roll up the windows, lock the vehicle, take the keys, and conceal valuables, preferably in the trunk. During hours of darkness, park and walk in lighted areas to the extent possible.

When returning to your vehicle, carry your keys in your hand and be ready to unlock the door and enter as quickly as possible. As you approach your vehicle, scan the area, glance underneath the vehicle, and take a quick look inside before entering.

While out and about, present an alert appearance. Be aware of your surroundings; scan the area from time to time. Avoid concentrating so hard on shopping that you fail to keep track of your surroundings, others near you, or your personal property.

- Wear conservative, comfortable clothing.
- Grip carried items firmly and avoid leaving them unattended.
- Carry minimal cash and valuables, wear minimal jewelry.

Shop with friends or relatives if possible; there **IS** safety in numbers. As you shop, be alert in crowded places. Among pickpockets' favorites are revolving doors, jammed aisles, elevators, and public transportation stops and vehicles, especially at rush hour. Carry the day's most expensive purchases closest to your body, and don't carry so much you lose the ability to react quickly.

Keep a close eye on your children while shopping. Teach your children to go to a store clerk or security guard if they ever get separated from you in a store/mall. Be sure they know their first and last name so they can tell someone who they are. It's best to keep children under four (4) in a stroller. Children in shopping carts should be properly belted and seated in the child carrier area at all times—never let your child stand in or push a shopping cart. If possible, leave your children with a babysitter while you are shopping. For holiday shopping, consider making arrangements with family or friends/neighbors, and take turns babysitting.

Return to your vehicle periodically to check on it and reduce the amount you are carrying. Store packages in the trunk or, if your vehicle doesn't have one, out of plain view (on the floorboard, under a blanket or clothes, etc). When possible, have purchases delivered instead of taking them with you; many businesses offer free delivery during the holiday shopping season. Ask for an escort to your car if you feel nervous.

Return to the mall or store for assistance if you spot suspicious activity near your vehicle. Stay alert while loading items into or out of the vehicle or arranging cargo stowage. If someone approaches, and you feel threatened, get in and lock up until they leave the area; if they loiter, drive away.

Using debit or credit cards is much safer than carrying a lot of cash. If the store doesn't take cards, consider obtaining traveler's checks which, unlike cash, can be replaced if lost or stolen. Visit ATM's only at well-lighted and populated locations; visit during daylight hours if possible.

Using the drive-up is usually safer than walking up or into a facility. Remember to scan around you as you make your withdrawal. Many ATMs now have "fisheye" mirrors mounted above the keyboard to enable you to view the entire surrounding area while conducting business; try to patronize ATMs so-equipped, and use the mirror!

If anyone is loitering, or you don't like their looks, go to another ATM. Stand such that those behind you cannot see your PIN as you enter it; your PIN should NEVER be written down on or carried with your ATM card.

Be observant. Avoid dark areas, short-cuts, cul-de-sacs, and suspicious persons. Stay near light and people.

Be prepared to flee potential problems. If apprehensive about any location for any reason,

leave. Consider carrying a whistle. Weapons are not recommended, and may be unlawful.

If followed —

On Foot:

1. Cross the street
2. Vary your pace
3. Change direction

By Vehicle:

1. Execute several right turns to verify
2. Get and stay on arterial streets
3. Note and record:
 - o license plate number
 - o description of vehicle and occupant(s)

If followed by a vehicle while on foot, turn the "wrong way" onto a One-Way Street. If follower persists, go to an occupied and lighted location (convenience store, fire station, police station) and summon police.

Confine your charitable giving to reputable established organizations, preferably those with a local branch.

If solicited by an individual for personal charity, don't give cash; offer to buy the individual food or drink or refer them to local assistance resources.

If solicited for an unfamiliar organized charity, ask for literature so you can make an informed decision about giving; any reputable organization will be glad to provide material.

To avoid telephone solicitation to the extent possible, sign up for the [National Do Not Call Registry](#). If solicited by telephone despite being on the list, simply hang up — it's your phone. If you choose to speak to the solicitor, do not give out credit card numbers or personal information not listed in the telephone directory, and don't allow the organization to come to your home until you are certain of their reliability. Instead, ask them to send you information so you can make an informed decision and mail in your donation.

With the exception of local organizations, door-to-door sales are often fraudulent, and should be viewed with skepticism. If it sounds too good to be true, it usually is.

Under consumer protection laws, you have a right to written information about any offer, and the right to cancel any order within three days should you reconsider your decision.

Make sure you obtain enough information to enable you to re-contact the vendor or his/her office in the event you have questions or change your mind. If you don't want to be bothered by door-to-door solicitors, most locations have a law that solicitors must avoid homes which display a "NO SOLICITORS" sign; bear in mind this usually doesn't apply to religious proselytizing or charitable organizations.

For further information about consumer protection laws, contact the your State Attorney

General's Office.

Promptly report suspicious persons, vehicles, and crimes to the local law enforcement agency.