



BLOCK WATCH NEWSLETTER
DECEMBER 2011

The rigors of the holiday season are upon us. Our minds are filled with what to buy that special someone and the look that will be on their face when they open that gift under the Christmas tree.

Unfortunately, as we rush around completing our shopping, we are being watched, and not by a jolly old elf living at the North Pole. Along with the joys of the season, this time of year also brings out some of the worst in people. Every year, crimes of opportunity seem to increase around the holidays as innocent and trusting people are taken advantage of. Most of us give thieves a shopping list for our homes and cars without even knowing it.

Distracted shoppers rush around, stressed out, careless, and forgetful. Homes are left empty in the great homeward-bound holiday migration. This holiday season; don't let the holiday spirit move you to leave your home and your wallet open to opportunistic thieves.

The Post Falls Police Department would like to share some of tips to make the holidays a little safer and happier for you and your family.

Don't Shop 'Til You Drop

- Be aware of your surroundings at all times.
- Take a friend along when doing your holiday shopping.
- Park in a well-lighted area, close the windows, and lock your car.
- Try not to leave packages, boxes and shopping bags visible through the car windows. Lock them in the trunk.
- Don't get overburdened with packages; always keep one hand free.
- Keep your purse close to your body, not dangling. Put you wallet in your front pants pocket.
- Teach your children to go to the store clerk or security guard if they get separated from you.

When Shopping Online, Use Common Sense to Protect Against Fraud or ID Theft

- Only shop with companies you know.
- Keep your personal information private, and keep your password secure.
- If the online shopping outlet does not direct you to a secure connection when it is time to give your credit card information, it is probably not safe or reputable.

Make Sure You Don't Invite Crime Home for the Holidays

- Never display gifts where they can be seen through windows or doors.
- Criminals sometimes pose as couriers delivering gifts, if you're not sure; ask for ID and call their office to verify employment.
- The holidays are a good time to update or start inventory of your home.
- Take photos or make a video of items and list description and serial numbers.

Your Trash Tells a Story

- Criminals will drive around neighborhoods on trash pick up days looking at the empty boxes you have put out on the curb. This tells them exactly what new things you have just purchased for your home. It is their "shopping list."
- Instead of putting these boxes out for trash pick up, make a special run to the dump, or better yet, deposit these recyclables at one of the bins at our local schools. You protect yourself from a potential robbery, you help out the schools, and you are being environmentally friendly all at the same time.
- Use a shredder on old bills and credit card offers that you do not accept. These provide information about your identity.
- Don't simply cut up that old credit card or debit card. It is too easy for a patient and enterprising thief to put the pieces to that jigsaw puzzle back together. Cut up the card and either burn the pieces or put half in this week's trash and half in next week's trash.

When You Travel, Be Sure to Pack Your Common Sense

- Always lock doors and windows when you leave, even for a few minutes.
- Stop all mail and suspend all deliveries, or arrange for a trusted neighbor to take in your mail, newspapers, and other deliveries.
- Use timer lights to make your house look lived in.
- Don't leave packages, luggage, cameras, or purses in the car where they can be seen.
- Use credit cards or traveler's checks instead of cash.
- Put valuables in the hotel safe, or hide them in a secure place.
- Always lock balcony doors.
- Call the Police Department and ask that your house be put on a vacation watch for trips of more than a few days. This provides extra patrol in your neighborhood.

Take a Moment to Remember What the Holidays are About

- Tempers sometimes grow short in the stores and the mall. When it looks like an interaction may escalate into a violent altercation, take a step back and ask yourself if that place in line or that last toy on the shelf is worth an injury or a criminal charge. Sometimes the best course of action is a big smile and a hearty "Merry Christmas." It will make both of you feel a lot better.

Hope for Everyone...All the Time

The holidays can bring us some of our greatest joys. They can provide some of our lowest moments, as well. It is during these moments when thoughts of suicide often creep into our minds. The Post Falls Police Department has developed a new awareness program called "Suicide Awareness: Hope for Everyone...All the Time."

The statistics for suicide are staggering. Kootenai County has the highest rate of suicide, per capita, in the state of Idaho. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for Idahoans ages 15-34. For every successful suicide, there are 25 unsuccessful attempts.

The Police Department's Suicide Awareness program provides a support system, as well as referral to community resources during these dark thoughts.

If you need help with this program, contact the Post Falls Police Department at 208-773-3517 or go online to www.postfallspolice.com. We will also provide presentations to community groups as we try to fight this growing epidemic.

Prepare Your Vehicle and Drive Safe

Along with the holidays comes the addition danger of winter driving and getting used to the conditions of the first snow fall of the season. Again, follow these simple tips to keep you and your family safe on the roads at this time of year.

- Prepare your vehicle for inclement weather. Maintain a variety of safety supplies such as: flares, blanket, empty gas container, sand, fire extinguisher, and other necessary safety items.
- Be sure your spare tire is “ready” for use.
- Remember your back to basic driving skills: wear your seat belt, lights on, allow proper following and braking distance, use turn signals.
- If road conditions are treacherous, please stay home.
- If you have teenagers driving for the first time in winter driving conditions, give them a little practice time before letting go out on the roads alone.

Block Watch Meetings

- If you are having a block watch meeting, we are interested in assisting you with this endeavor. Please feel free to email the Community Services section of the Police Department at aschild@postfallspolice.com or cexley@postfallspolice.com and someone from our Department will attend your meeting and share some tips and advise to make your block watch more effective.

IN THE LOOP:

We have compiled a list of reported burglaries and vandalisms in the City of Post Falls. Along with any pertinent information you may need to be aware of. We have provided a map labeling the four “districts” within the city of Post Falls on our website. Go to the Community Services link, then go to Block Watch and click “district map”. In the months of September, October, and November, the following incidents were reported:

District #1= listed 9 auto burglaries, 7 residential burglaries, 4 non residential burglary, and 12 vandalisms reported.

District #2 = listed 12 auto burglaries, 19 residential burglaries, 3 non residential burglaries, and 39 vandalisms reported.

District #3 = listed 9 auto burglaries, 8 residential burglaries, 1 non residential burglaries, and 12 vandalisms reported.

District #4= listed 13 auto burglaries, 4 residential burglaries, 5 non residential burglaries, with 15 vandalisms reported.

If you see anything out of the ordinary, have questions, or concerns please call the Post Falls Police Department (208) 773-3517 or come see us at 1717 E Polston Ave, Post Falls ID.