

SAFE SHOPPING TIPS FROM THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE

(November 25, 2011)

The holiday shopping season is upon us, and the criminals are probably ready. Accordingly, the Hanover County Sheriff's Office asks citizens to take certain precautions while shopping.

- Park in well-lit areas, as close to busy entrances as possible. Don't park next to dumpsters or anything that can conceal you from observation.
- Before leaving your car, look around for anything unusual or suspicious. If you notice anything suspicious, drive away and notify law enforcement.
- Walk in a brisk and confident manner, constantly looking around. If you notice someone, don't look away. Look at the person and notice what they are wearing. The fact that you noticed them may deter them from attempting to commit a crime against you. Also walk facing traffic so you can see approaching vehicles.
- When shopping, don't leave valuables visible inside your vehicle. Radios, cameras, pocketbooks and packages attract attention and tempt thieves. Secure your valuables in the trunk if you need to leave them in the vehicle.
- Always lock your car, even if you're leaving it for only a short period of time (even if you're parked at home). And make sure all windows are completely closed.
- While shopping, keep your purse close to your body and keep a firm grip on it. Stay alert, pay attention to your

surroundings and be aware of anyone around you. Don't allow yourself to be distracted. Shop with a friend or relative when possible.

- Don't flaunt expensive items or jewelry. Conceal your credit card numbers from spying eyes. After receiving your credit card or ATM receipt, secure it in your purse or checkbook.
- When returning to your car, don't get loaded down with packages. Have your keys in your hand ready to use. If you are returning alone, wait until someone else is leaving and walk out the same time as they do; you are less likely to be attacked if there are others around.
- Before entering your car, check inside, under and around to make sure no one is hiding. Once you're inside your car, lock the doors immediately.
- If you are followed, don't go home. Drive to a well-lit area around other people, such as a gas station or convenience store. There you can attract attention by screaming or blowing the horn.
- If you are attacked, keep a level head. Your survival could depend on what you do. If you are hysterical, you won't be able to help yourself. If you choose to use physical force, strike quickly and run away.
- When leaving your home, be sure you pull the door shut and lock the deadbolt along with making sure the windows are locked. If you will not return before darkness falls, leave a light on.
- When traveling, always have a planned route and be aware of your location. Inform a family member or friend of your plans and do not drive when fatigued.

- Make sure your vehicle is prepared for traveling and check the weather conditions where you will be traveling and be prepared for those conditions as well.
- When you leave your residence to travel during the holiday season, please leave your lights on a timer. And they should be set up in “your” living pattern.
- When you are bringing presents home and taking them inside be sure you are aware of your surroundings.
- Have them in a bag or cover them in such a way that everyone doesn’t know all the items you have just purchased and will now be stored in your home until the big day arrives.
- Also when you leave your vehicle to take items inside shut and lock your vehicle.
- In this day and age of ordering presents off the Internet be careful of delivery people. Make sure you are expecting something to be delivered. Confirm their identity. This means check their company identification and also check out the vehicle they are driving before you open your door.
- After the big day of celebration and the trash is ready to go out, try to put all the boxes inside of a trash can/bag. If need be cut them up into smaller pieces so they will fit. This will hide any and all descriptive packages of “your families” gift receiving.

Carry a cell phone and call 911 in the event of an emergency; dialing 365-6140 also will get you in touch with Hanover County Emergency Communications.