



BOMA/Chicago Holiday Safety Guidelines

Safety and security are simple and well worth the effort and expense required. PROTECTION is synonymous with preparation. The better prepared you are, the safer you will be. Whether it is office, home or street safety, the one common thread in crime prevention is BEING PREPARED. The Holiday Season is a good time for a special reminder about procedures that should be used year-round.

Street Safety

- ◆ Do not carry an excessive number of credit cards -- plan ahead. Carry credit cards and checks separately from cash; keep the numbers of all credit cards in a safe place in case they are lost or stolen. One quick way to accomplish this is simply to make copies of the cards.
- ◆ Shop with friends or relatives if possible -- there is safety in numbers.
- ◆ Be aware of persons who are standing or following too closely. If this occurs while you are walking, cross the street immediately. Find a police officer and inform him/her of your suspicions. When using public transportation, tell the driver about any suspicious behavior. In a store or office building, contact the manager or security officer. A trained professional is better equipped to handle a potentially dangerous situation.
- ◆ Park your car in a garage or on a well-lit street. Always check underneath it, then in the back seat and on the floors before opening the door to make sure no one is hiding and waiting for you.
- ◆ Lock your purchases in the trunk of your car. Never leave packages on the back seat or in a visible location. Place all packages in the trunk and move the vehicle to any other location if you are going to continue to shop. Thieves wait and watch for opportunities.
- ◆ Take well-traveled, well-lit routes. Don't use shortcuts through alleys or walkways between buildings.
- ◆ Leave only your ignition key with a parking lot attendant. Never leave your trunk or house keys. Carry an extra set of keys in case your keys are lost or stolen.
- ◆ Use caution when using ATM banking machines.
- ◆ Always consider the time of day and location. Never write your PIN on your card or carry it with you. Choose a PIN that is not your birthday or part of your social security number in case your wallet or purse is lost or stolen. NEVER exit with cash in your hand from the ATM and never count your money on the street or in public view.
- ◆ Be alert in crowded places. Pickpockets' favorite places are revolving doors, crowded stores, elevators, public transportation and bus stops at rush hour. Thieves often work in pairs; one will bump into you while another picks your pocket or purse. Be sure purses and packages are in front of you at all times, particularly in a revolving door.
- ◆ Be watchful when using the pedways.

- ◆ Use caution when using public restrooms. Never leave your packages, coat, briefcase or purse outside the stall. If you use a hook or shelf in a stall, make certain someone can't reach over or under.
- ◆ Guard your purse; do not carry your wallet in your back pocket. Consider using a "tummy pack"; they are effective in deterring pickpocketing. Do not put your purse on the floor or hang it over a chair, particularly in a restaurant. If you have to put your purse on the floor, make sure that it is securely between your feet.
- ◆ If you carry a pager or cell phone, make sure you carry it in a place where it can't readily be taken from you.

Car Safety

- ◆ Lock doors and windows when you get in; keep them locked.
- ◆ If you spot somebody near or under your car as you approach it, keep walking and contact the police.
- ◆ Always have your car key out and ready to insert in the car door before you approach your vehicle. The faster you can get into your car, the safer you are.
- ◆ If you are sitting in your car and somebody suspicious approaches, drive away.
- ◆ When you are driving, particularly in a high-crime area, leave space between your car and the car in front so if somebody tries to box you in, you have an escape route. Stay in the center lane.
- ◆ If another motorist bumps your car, keep your windows closed and either wait for police or keep driving to the nearest police station. If you are held up in your car, the Chicago Police Department recommends – as in any armed robbery – don't resist! Don't endanger yourself and your passengers. Most importantly, don't allow an armed robbery to turn into a murder!
- ◆ If the garage offers an escort service to your car, you should not hesitate to use it.

Pan Handlers

- ◆ Generally, money given directly to street people does not go to a good cause! Instead, make a donation to a social service agency.
- ◆ If you are concerned and would like to help, there are social service agencies providing necessary and services for street people. Lists of these agencies are provided by the Chicago Police Department, the Department of Human Services, the Gold Coast Area Business Association and Travelers and Immigrants Aid.
- ◆ If you feel threatened, report it immediately to the police.

Office Safety

- ◆ Office thieves take advantage of opportunities and, if you remove the opportunity, you greatly reduce the chances of being victimized. Remember: Take all safety precautions! STAY ALERT! Office thieves are most active at opening, closing and lunch hours, when the maximum traffic flows occur.
- ◆ Remove from public view and secure unattended holiday gifts, purses, wallets and coats which provide attractive invitations to a would-be thief.
- ◆ Reception areas should always be staffed and outer doors leading into the office should be kept locked at all times.

- ◆ Be wary of solicitors or suspicious persons. "May I help you?" will often be sufficient to deter a potential intruder. Thieves do not want to be confronted or identified.
- ◆ Following your own instincts is crucial. If there is ever any doubt or you don't feel right about an outsider in your office, hallway or restroom, immediately call Security or the Office of the Building.
- ◆ If working after-hours, call Security and report that you are still in the building.
- ◆ When working late, women should not enter an elevator with an unknown man; try to stand so that you have access to the control panel. Never stand with your back to a person; you could be an easy target for a pickpocket.
- ◆ Place Valuables in the office in a locked cabinet or drawer.
- ◆ If working after-hours, call Security and report that you are still in the building.
- ◆ Do not make co-workers aware of the fact that you have excess cash in your possession.
- ◆ Always keep laptop computers properly secured with a cable lock, docking station or locked inside a desk or cabinet. Laptops should have the company name or the owner's name engraved in a conspicuous place.

Home Safety

- ◆ Use timers to randomly set off lights to give your home a lived-in look. Playing a radio talk show station will give the illusion that someone is home; this is a very inexpensive but effective safeguard.
- ◆ Keep sidewalks and driveways clear of snow and ice. If you are away for the holidays, make arrangements to have this done, as well as having your mail and newspaper picked up by a neighbor or friend.
- ◆ Never leave Holiday lights on when no one is home. Ensure that all ornaments and lights are in safe condition and fire-resistant. All electrical ornamentation, both indoors and outdoors, should be properly wired and UL approved.
- ◆ Have a multi-functional fire extinguisher easily available and in working order in your home.
- ◆ Christmas trees should be regularly watered to prevent drying out and becoming fire hazards.
- ◆ Smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors strategically placed throughout a home are the most effective and inexpensive safeguards for the home and family. Change the batteries regularly; a good idea is to change them the beginning of each year.
- ◆ Practice emergency evacuation plans.
- ◆ Burglar bars should be unlocked only when you are at home to prevent deaths in the case of fire or the need for emergency calls. In case of emergencies, your address should be easily found on the back of the apartment, house or garage. This makes alley or backyard entrances easy to identify when assistance is needed.
- ◆ Do not hide keys anywhere! Instead, leave keys with a trusted neighbor or friend.

Decorations

- ◆ Wear gloves while decorating with spun glass "angel hair," which can irritate your eyes and skin. Try the common substitute of non-flammable cotton.
- ◆ Both angel hair and cotton snow are flame retardant when used alone. However, if artificial snow is sprayed onto them, the dried combination will burn rapidly. When spraying artificial snow on windows or other surfaces, be sure to follow directions carefully. These sprays can irritate your lungs if you inhale them.

Fire Places

- ◆ Do not burn wrapping paper in the fireplace because it often contains metallic materials which can be toxic if burned.
- ◆ Do not try to burn evergreens or wreaths in the fireplace or in a wood stove to dispose of them—they are likely to flare out of control and send flames and smoke into the room.

Candles

- ◆ Never use lighted candles near trees, boughs, curtains/drapes, or with any potentially flammable item.

Toys and Gifts

- ◆ Be especially careful when you choose toys for infants or small children. Be sure anything you give them is too big to get caught in the throat, nose or ears. Avoid toys with small parts that can be pulled or broken off.
- ◆ If you are giving toys to several children in one family, consider their age differences and the chances that younger children will want to play with older kids' toys.

Older Adults

- ◆ Select gifts for older adults that are not heavy or awkward to handle.
- ◆ For persons with arthritis, make sure the gift does not require assembly and can be easily opened and closed.
- ◆ Choose books with large type for anyone with vision impairment.

Plants

- ◆ Small children may think that holiday plants look good enough to eat. But many plants can cause severe stomach problems. Plants to watch out for include: mistletoe, holly berries, Jerusalem cherry, and amaryllis. Keep all of these plants out of children's reach.

Food and Cooking

- ◆ The holidays often mean preparing large meals for family and friends. Wash hands, utensils, sink, and anything else that has come in contact with raw poultry. Keep in mind that a stuffed bird takes longer to cook. For questions concerning holiday turkey preparation and cooking call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-800-535-4555.
- ◆ Refrigerate or freeze leftovers in covered shallow containers (less than two inches deep) within two hours after cooking. Date the leftovers for future use.

Alcohol, Parties and Driving

- ◆ Being a smart party host or guest should include being sensible about alcoholic drinks. More than half of all traffic fatalities are alcohol-related. Use designated drivers, people who do not drink, to drive other guests home after a holiday party.

Stress

- ◆ The holiday season is one of the most stressful times of the year. You can't avoid stress completely, but you can give yourself some relief.
- ◆ Allow enough time to shop rather than hurry through stores and parking lots.
- ◆ Only plan to do a reasonable number of errands.
- ◆ When shopping, make several trips out to the car to drop off packages rather than trying to carry too many items.
- ◆ Take time out for yourself.
- ◆ Relax, read, or enjoy your favorite hobby at your own pace.

Christmas Trees

- ◆ A real tree can add to the spirit of Christmas by filling your home with beauty and the scent of pine. But a real tree can also pose a fire hazard. Each year, more than 400 residential fires involve Christmas trees and tragically nearly 40 deaths and 100 injuries result from those fires.
- ◆ Try to select a fresh tree by looking for one that is green. The needles of pines and spruces should bend and not break and should be hard to pull off the branches. On fir species, a needle pulled from a fresh tree will snap when bent, much like a fresh carrot. Also, look for a trunk sticky with sap.
- ◆ Cut off about two inches of the trunk and put the tree in a sturdy, water-holding stand. Keep the stand filled with water so the tree does not dry out quickly.
- ◆ Stand your tree away from fireplaces, radiators and other heat sources. Make sure the tree does not block foot traffic or doorways.
- ◆ If you use an artificial tree, choose one that tested and labeled as fire resistant. Artificial trees with built-in electrical systems should have the Underwriters Laboratory.

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