

TWELVE TIPS FOR CHRISTMAS

In the excitement of Christmas, the shopping, the celebrating, the entertaining, we are all likely to overlook some of the very basic precautions we would normally take with respect to safety and security. Listed below are twelve tips to ponder on - if they make just one person have a safer Christmas or prevent one instance of loss by theft, then they will have been worthwhile.

1. Take extra care when shopping. Money in purses and wallets is particularly attractive to the pickpocket - consider distributing your money amongst several pockets. The goods you buy are more secure in a zippered bag than in an open plastic carrier bag.
2. If you are using a car for your shopping trip and it is necessary to leave the car unattended, place your purchases out of sight, preferably in the boot.
3. Beware of being offered items at low prices - they may have been stolen or be of inferior quality.
4. Presents purchased or received should not be displayed where they could be seen by a thief, for instance under a Christmas tree standing in a downstairs bay window. Where appropriate, post-code new items.
5. Make sure that your indoor and outdoor decorative lights are electrically safe and protected by a fuse of the correct rating. Flexes to Christmas trees should not be run under the carpet and should not present a tripping hazard. If the flex needs to be extended, use the correct rating of wire and a proper connector, with the female section closest to the mains supply. Disconnect from the mains when retiring.
6. Christmas may be the one time in the year when a family has an open fire. A fire screen is essential. In the case of log fires, avoid woods that spark, namely the resinous soft woods.
7. Inform house guests of the escape plans to be used in the event of fire - make sure that there are door and window keys for them to use. Ash trays should be available for smokers and there should be no litter bins in rooms where people are likely to smoke. Tell guests (politely of course) not to smoke in bedrooms. Make sure your smoke alarms are working and have spare batteries to hand - do not remove the batteries for use in toys.
8. The kitchen should be regarded as a hazard zone. There will be flammable liquids, pans of boiling water, hot cooking vessels and plates. Young children are particularly at risk and it is advisable to limit the people in the kitchen to those who are involved in the food preparation. Under no circumstances should the cook leave the stove unattended, for instance to answer the telephone.
9. When presents have been unwrapped, take the wrapping paper, boxes and any polystyrene outside in order to avoid creating a fire hazard with these combustible materials.
10. When it is time for the refuse to be collected, do not tempt the burglar by leaving on display empty boxes that electrical or other expensive items came in. Till receipts and statements bearing bank card or account numbers should not be put in the refuse sack or wheelie bin.
11. Unattended new bicycles should be padlocked and, at the first opportunity, post-coded.
12. Finally, how about putting a security item on your Christmas list and indeed giving security items as presents - a shed alarm is very seasonal?