

CONSUMERS REMINDED TO USE SAFE SHOPPING PRACTICES THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

INDIANAPOLIS—The Indiana Department of Homeland Security and the Indiana State Police are reminding Hoosiers to use caution and common sense when shopping the day after Thanksgiving and throughout the holiday season.

"Retail outlets are often crowded with merchandise and people this time of year," said Indiana State Fire Marshal Jim Greeson. "Make sure you know how to get out of every building you visit in case there is a fire."

The Indiana State Fire Marshal's Office is a division of the Indiana Department of Homeland Security.

Retail Fire Safety

- Be aware of your surroundings in any store or building, and know where the exits are located. Periodically, take a moment to reorient yourself to these exits while you are shopping.
- Notify building security or another employee if you notice exits that are blocked with merchandise, displays or other items.
- If a fire alarm sounds, leave your shopping carts or bags and evacuate the building immediately. No bargain is worth ignoring a fire alarm.
- Retail store owners and employees should be aware of building occupancy limits and attentive to potential overcrowding. If a consumer thinks a building may be filled past capacity, they should notify a store employee or consider returning to that store later.
- If retailers are closely monitoring occupancy levels they may ask you to wait before entering the store until another patron exits to avoid exceeding building capacity. Please follow these directions or consider returning to the store when it is less crowded.

"The Indiana State Police remind holiday shoppers to shop with friends, because there truly is safety in numbers," says Captain David Bursten. "When you head to your car, be aware of your surroundings; look to see if you're being followed or if people appear to be loitering in the parking lot. Don't feel silly about asking mall security to escort you to your car."

Retail Shopping Safety

- Avoid wearing expensive jewelry while out shopping.
- Place your checkbook, cash or credit cards in your front pockets. Only bring one or two credit cards and a limited amount of cash with you.
- Women should remember to keep their purse latched shut and close to their body. A dangling purse is a crime of opportunity waiting to happen.

Parking Lot Safety

- Consolidate as many packages as possible or make several trips to your car to deposit packages in the trunk. Don't allow yourself to become so burdened down with packages that you become a tempting target.

- Always park where there is plenty of light, not only around your car, but also from your car to the mall or store entrance.
- Lock your vehicle while parked in shopping center parking lots.
- Have your keys in your hand before you go to your car.
- When walking through parking lots, be sure that you are aware of your surroundings, and walk with authority. Don't look like a victim. Never hesitate to ask for a security escort if you feel unsafe.

For more information about Holiday shopping safety visit GetPrepared.in.gov.

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FOLLOWING CONTACT INFORMATION NOT FOR PUBLIC DISCLOSURE:

For Media Only:

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ISP: Please contact your district's PIO /recruiter at <http://www.in.gov/isp/2365.htm#>.