



## WINTER CRIME

The darker winter nights, and particularly the period leading up to and over Christmas, present their own problems when it comes to crime.

### Shopping safely and sensibly

- Be aware of your belongings when you're in a crowd - there may be pickpockets around.
- Put your purse or wallet away before leaving the till - don't let staff or other customers rush you.
- Take care at the ATM - be wary of people standing too close for comfort - try and use an ATM inside the bank.
- If you shop online, check out the site's payment methods and the security they offer - many sites can take orders over the phone if you don't want your details floating around in the ether.



### Using the car . . .

- Park in a busy and well-lit area.
- Leave personal and valuable items at home.
- If you must have them in the car, store them in the boot before you leave.
- Don't store your bought goods in the car and then return to the shops for more - you don't know who may be watching in the car park.
- Late night shopping may be more convenient, but do take care and take someone with you if possible.

### Time for a security health check

- Check outdoor security lights and replace blown bulbs.
- Check padlocks, hasps and hinges on your outside doors for wear and tear, and replace them.
- Many people have freezers in the garage - Christmas food and alcohol is vulnerable - and don't forget new bicycles are also at risk!
- Has your house alarm been serviced recently?
- If you don't have an alarm, you can always buy a battery operated single room alarm to protect your hallway, shed or garage.

### Protecting your home while you are out

- Use timer switches to operate lights and radios tuned to a talk radio station in the house when you are out.
- Although the tree looks lovely in the window, don't leave the lights on and curtains open when you go out - and don't leave presents under the tree!

- If you go on holiday, ask a neighbour or friend to pick up your post - they can also park their car on your drive
- After Christmas, dispose of boxes and packaging carefully - don't leave them on the roadside or on the top of the wheelie bin.

### Unexpected visitors

- Bogus Callers: pretending to be from a utilities company (water, gas, electricity, phone, even police).
- Distraction Burglars: one will keep you at your door with an excuse (eg, looking for an address or a lost ball/dog) while an accomplice commits the burglary round the back.
- Cold Callers: hard-sell sales reps who turn up without an appointment and won't leave till you have signed a contract.
- Rogue Traders: unqualified workmen offering to do jobs on your home, usually for cash, often badly and very expensively.

### Genuine unexpected visitors

- Utilities staff with ID regarding emergency repairs
- Political groups canvassing for election purposes
- Charity collectors with ID and charity number
- Emergency Services staff on production of warrant card or official identification
- Religious groups and carol singers
- People delivering business flyers
- Whoever it is, before you answer the door, check all back doors and windows are closed - if it's a genuine caller, they won't mind waiting a few extra seconds.
- If you're not sure, don't open the door!

### Property marking - Why do it?

- Acts as a deterrent to thieves as it makes selling on stolen goods very difficult.
- Increases the chances of your property being returned to you.
- Helps the police build a strong case against the offender.
- Many different ways of property marking:  
UV pen: electrical items, bikes, etc  
Etching: power tools and equipment  
Smartwater: can be used on any item  
Use your house number/name and postcode
- Remember to register your valuables on [www.immobilise.com](http://www.immobilise.com)