

As the holiday season approaches, malls, retailers, and grocery stores are more crowded than usual with busy shoppers.

Here are some tips to help you shop safely during the holidays and year round!



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ed Gonzalez".

Sheriff Ed Gonzalez



For more information and services offered,

please visit

www.harriscountyso.org

Non Emergency Contact:

713-221-6000

HARRIS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Crime Prevention Unit



*Holiday Shopping
Safety Tips*

HARRIS COUNTY
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@HCSOTexas



Harris County
Sheriff's Office



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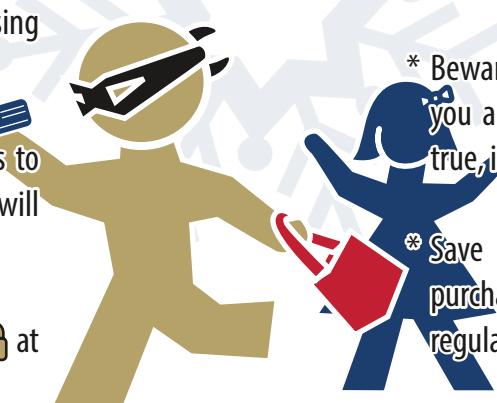


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Shopping Safety Tips

<i>Shopping in Stores</i>	<i>Shopping with Children</i>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">* Do not buy more than you can carry. Ask for assistance, if needed, to carry your purchases out to your car.* Do not take packages to your car and then return to shopping. Thieves watch the parking lot for this type of activity and target vehicles with valuables inside.* Do not leave packages visible through your car windows. Lock them in the trunk.* Have your keys in your hand when approaching your vehicle. Check the back seat and around your car before getting in it.* It is much safer to shop in the daytime. If you cannot avoid being out at night, park in a well-lit, high-traffic area. Walk with other shoppers or have a security guard escort you.* Deter pickpockets. Carry your purse close to your body. Keep your wallet inside a coat or front pant pocket.* Do not carry large sums of cash.* Tell security if you see any suspicious persons and/or activities.* Double check for your credit card or checkbook after you make a purchase.	<p>If you are shopping with children, have a plan in case you are separated from each other.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">* Have a central meeting place.* Ensure that the child knows your cell phone number. If not, write it down and give it to him/her.* Go over "Stranger Danger" with your children so that they know what to do/not do when approached by a stranger.* When at a fueling station, do not leave your vehicle unlocked, not even while pumping gas.* Children should NEVER be left unattended. 
<i>Prevent Identity Theft</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Consider alternate options to pay for your merchandise, such as one-time or multi-use disposable credit cards for online stores and auction sites.* Wait until asked before pulling out your credit card or checkbook. An enterprising thief would love to "shoulder surf" to get your account information.* Keep personal information and passwords secure. Do not respond to requests to "verify" your information unless you initiated the contact. Legitimate businesses will not contact you in this manner.* Use secure websites for online purchases. Look for the icon of a locked padlock  at the bottom of the screen or "https" in the URL address. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Shop with companies you know and trust. Check for background information if you plan to buy from a new or unfamiliar company.* Beware of "bargains" from companies with whom you are unfamiliar – if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.* Save receipts and print confirmations for online purchases. Check bank and credit card statements regularly for possible fraudulent transactions.