



PRACTICE PARKING LOT SAFETY DURING THE HOLIDAYS AND YEAR AROUND



While street robberies and assaults happen year around, they peak during certain periods, such as the holidays. Criminals prey on distracted shoppers, carrying money and gifts. Don't be an easy target. Here are some crime prevention tips to help protect you and your property through this holiday season. Remember the predator has a plan – so should you.

The best self defense technique against a predators is: Prevention, Awareness, and Trusting your Instinct

- **Deter pickpocketers and purse-snatchers.** Don't overburden yourself with packages. You may need to be able to react quickly. Leave your purse at home or carry your purse close to your body so it's not dangling by the straps. Put a wallet in an inside coat or front pants pocket.
- **If your wallet or purse is stolen.** Cancel your credit cards immediately. Make a list or photocopies (front and back) of everything in your wallet before something happens and store it in a safe place.
- **Shop during daylight hours whenever possible.** If you must shop at night, go with friends. There is safety in numbers. Park in well-lit, populated areas and avoid remote areas. If shopping alone, exit the store with other shoppers and/or ask security to escort you to your car if you are uncomfortable.
- **Always lock your car and close the windows.** You should always lock your car and close the windows even if you are only gone for a few minutes.
- **Don't be distracted.** Attackers look for people who look vulnerable or distracted. They are looking for easy targets – Make yourself a difficult target - Don't be distracted by talking on your cell phone. The person on the other end cannot help you if you are being mugged.
- **Be Aware.** Stay alert to your surroundings and the people around you. Look inside your car and around it as you approach. Have your keys in your hand before you go to your car. Don't be shy about asking mall or store security for an escort. **Beware of strangers approaching you for any reason.** At this time of year, "con-artists" or attackers may try various methods of distracting you with the intention of taking your money, belongings, or hurting you.
- **Walk briskly and confidently through the parking lot.** Turn your head and look around every five steps. Stay aware and have your keys in hand. When you get to your car, keep looking around as you load your packages. After getting into your car, lock all your doors immediately before you start your car.
- **Watch for people who may be following you.** If you suspect someone is following you, you should switch directions, back towards the store. Do not continue towards your car. Return to the store and ask for security to escort you back to your car.
- **TRUST your instincts.** If it feels wrong or suspicious it probably is. Trust what you feel – do something. If you see something you feel is not right or feel uncomfortable about it, you should get away from that situation. Tell someone about it as soon as possible and call the police to report the incident.

- **Remember the Predator doesn't always look bad.** It is important to understand that strangers are not necessarily scary looking. They look like ordinary people and can be young or old. Basically, they are anyone you do not know. If a stranger approaches and tries to talk to you, you should say, "I'm sorry but I can't help you," and walk away. Stay aware of where that person is and do not put your head down or look away.
- **If you are threatened by violence.** Give up material things. They can be replaced. Your life cannot. Alert others to attract attention to yourself (i.e. running, screaming, honking the horn) and get to safety.

*These safety tips reflect the views expressed by Tammy Anderson and do not necessarily reflect those of California State University, Fresno.