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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Police encourage safety during travel and shopping

MURPHY (December 17, 2014) Like it or not, traveling and shopping are facts of life during the Christmas season, and while many are now shopping online or connecting with family electronically, those who visit the local malls and distant families should be very careful, says Murphy's Police Lt. Adana Barber.

"Online shopping and visiting have not completely replaced the personal visits," she said. "So, for those of you who still get in the car and drive to a shopping mall or family, there are some things you must do to ensure your safety."

- Be aware of your surroundings. Pay attention who is around you and be aware of anyone who may be watching you or following you. A small dose of suspicion is not a bad thing.
- Pick your parking spot wisely; look for a well-lit area. Never leave your vehicle unattended while the engine is running. "Driving around the parking lot to find a safe spot is well worth the effort. And, do not jump out while the engine is running just to get a sale item. That sale item might be very costly in the long run," she said.
- Have your keys out and ready when approaching your vehicle. Be aware of how you carry your purse or wallet; don't be an easy target. Those few minutes fumbling through your purse or pockets for your keys can give a criminal that little bit of time he or she needs. Don't give it to them.
- Be cautious when driving alone at night. Keep all car doors locked and windows closed while in or out of your car. "Enact the buddy system if you can. Get a neighbor, friend or relative to shop with you," she said.
- Do not park next to vans, trucks with camper shells or cars with tinted windows. This is a favorite gimmick of criminals. Again, be aware and observant.
- Let others know where you're going what your estimated travel times are. "If you're shopping for the family and don't want to reveal your purchases, let them know where you are at all times. Smartphone apps now allow family members to keep track of your movements. Reveal your location and check in often," she added.
- In the event of stormy weather, plan for icy roads or snow delays by packing water, warm clothing and food in the car. Be ready for any event. "It may sound trite, but it's better to be safe than sorry. Resist the temptation to think it can never happen to you. It can," she said.
- Keep your gas tank at least half full, especially if you are traveling alone. It's a good idea to make a habit of using only the top half of your gas tank.
- Before a long trip, have your vehicle checked out by a reputable vehicle service center. It only takes a few minutes, but it can make all the difference.

Following the unwrapping on Christmas day, avoid displaying boxes on the curb that describe the gifts. Empty boxes that advertise the new electronics or toys are an open invitation to burglars. Instead, break them down and fold them so the exterior is not visible.

"Shopping and traveling can be fun, but they should never be done blindly," she said.

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ABOUT MURPHY -- Murphy is a fast-growing community located in Collin County. The population is approximately 18,020, generally characterized as highly educated with a median household income above the state average. With more than 70 percent of the land developed, the community is dominated by single-family residences. City planners strive to preserve a country feel while exhibiting an aggressive economic development stance. The centrally-located municipal complex includes four buildings that house Fire, Police, City Administration and Public Works. Money Magazine has dubbed Murphy as the 27th Best Place to Live in America for small cities, and D Magazine placed Murphy as the fifth best suburb in the 2014 list, where it has consistently ranked in the top 10.