

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LCSO Offers Burglary Prevention Tips for Holiday Season

Loudoun County, VA- As the Holidays approach, so do the number of burglaries in Loudoun County and the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office wants you to know how to prevent these crimes and what to do if you are a victim.

The Loudoun County Sheriff's Office Crime Prevention Unit reminds residents to make sure doors and windows are locked, always secure your garage door, keep your house lit from the outside (use timers on lights and holiday lights), and have a trusted neighbor watch your home when you are out of town.

Residents are also encouraged to follow these tips to help prevent theft this Holiday season:

- ✓ Don't place boxes from recently received gifts out with the trash, as this will give burglars an indication of what may be inside your home. Cut up all boxes and packaging with identifying panels and bag them in dark colored trash bags.
- ✓ Try to keep gift boxes out of sight. If a burglar can see the gifts around the tree, it may be just the opportunity they were looking for.
- ✓ Do not leave gifts locked in your car. Your car is more easily broken into than your home. Find a good hiding place in your home and use it.
- ✓ Don't share your vacation/holiday plans on Social Media. It may be viewed by someone you did not intend on seeing it, allowing them to know when your home is a potential target.

The Crime Prevention Unit also encourages residents to document and record any of your expensive items make, model and serial numbers through Operation Inventory, a prevention based program intended to help curb the ongoing thefts taking place in Loudoun County. Thieves often depend on citizens not to have key information about their belongings. Information such as serial numbers, model numbers, make and model information are key pieces of information that law enforcement uses to recover and identify stolen property. These key pieces of information help law enforcement quickly identify stolen property and aid in the prosecution of the offenders. The form can be downloaded at <http://sheriff.loudoun.gov/operation-inventory> .

Loudoun Sheriff Mike Chapman and the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office Property Crimes Unit also want residents to know that there are several key steps they should take if they believe their home has been burglarized: "Not all burglaries are preventable," said Sheriff Chapman. "Knowing a few steps to take if you are a victim can make a difference," he added.

- ✓ If you return home to find that your home has been burglarized, residents are encouraged to wait outside the home, possibly in a locked car or at a neighbor's home, until deputies arrive.
- ✓ For your safety residents are advised to never search the home yourself. There is always a chance someone could still be in the home.
- ✓ Detectives urge residents to never touch anything inside the home before deputies arrive. By touching items you could tamper with possible forensic evidence and limit the chances of a successful conclusion in the case.

By taking these steps you increase the chances of having your stolen items recovered as well as increase the possibility the thieves will be caught. Residents are also encouraged to report any suspicious activity, persons or vehicles immediately by calling the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office at 703-777-1021.

As part of the agency's efforts to prevent crimes in the community, the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office Crime Prevention Unit also offers free home security surveys. To schedule a security survey of your home or business, please contact Sgt. Linda Cerniglia at Linda.Cerniglia@loudoun.gov.

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