



## BC Crime Prevention Association

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Be alert when shopping this holiday season

Burnaby, December 14 2007: Attention to personal safety is a necessity in our hectic lives but with the approach of the Christmas shopping season the BC Crime Prevention Association has some tips to make shopping a safer and happier experience.

Unfortunately, the Christmas season is a draw for criminals who see these situations as opportunities to take advantage of consumers and remember; criminals have Christmas shopping lists too!

"Shoppers need to develop a personal safety radar" says Valerie MacLean, Executive Director, "they should be aware of what is happening around them."

- Before setting out remove from your wallet or purse any credit cards and other valuable identification that you will not need – it's all about risk reduction
- When using an ATM or withdrawing cash at a bank wicket, make sure you safely store money beneath your clothing in a fanny pack or front pocket – do not leave the ATM/bank with cash visible in your hand
- At the cash register make sure you get your own credit card back and receipts for your purchase and if you use a debit card – PROTECT YOUR PIN! – be aware of anyone watching you enter your PIN
- Shopping Malls are full of people doing the same thing as you but watch for pickpockets – crowded stores and Food Courts are perfect places for theft of wallets and purses left unguarded
- Plan to leave your heaviest purchases to the last but don't be so overburdened with packages that you leave yourself vulnerable to theft – better to store some purchases in your car and continue shopping with greater freedom
- Do not leave gifts on the back seat of your car or clearly visible from the outside. It is a good practice to store purchases in the trunk – out of sight and out of mind. If your trunk is so equipped, disengage the latch so that if a thief breaks into your car he cannot push the dashboard trunk release
- There is safety in numbers – take a companion with you if possible as this will significantly reduce the risk of theft.



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- Always carry a cell phone so that you have quick access to emergency services
- Be alert to distraction theft – watch for pairs of individuals who have a routine of distracting you to facilitate theft

From time to time, the BC Crime Prevention Association offers advice under its *Crime Shield* banner to give the public the tools they need through education and awareness to protect themselves against crime.

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