

Whether It's Last Minute Shopping or Getting Ready for After Christmas Sales; Stay Safe and Secure at Year-End

LOS ANGELES, Dec. 23, 2010 /PRNewswire/ -- With just a few days left before Christmas, it's getting to be crunch time for last-minute shoppers. Also, severe weather throughout the country – with record snow, rain and frigid temperatures in many parts – has added an unforeseen complication for many people struggling to finish their end-of-year holiday shopping.

(Logo: <http://photos.prnewswire.com/prnh/20080605/LATH062>)

Unfortunately, this combination of factors can cause many people to take safety short cuts that could lead to ending the year on a sour note. For some, the volatility of the year-end leads to an assortment of risky behaviors – inattentive driving, too-much focus on getting in-and-out of stores without paying attention to surroundings, forgetting to implement the most basic of personal safety measures, etc.

Farmers Insurance wants everyone to start the new year on a high note so it is offering the following safety tips for time-crunched end of the year shoppers:

Before heading to the stores

- Have your shopping list ready
- Dress comfortably, leave the "bling" at home (remember, you're power shopping)
- Only take those debit/credit cards you'll be using; taking extra cards only weighs you down and may even tempt you to make unnecessary purchases
- If you can, avoid using cash; alert thieves will be more tempted to target those carrying large amounts of cash as opposed to debit/credit cards
- Take advantage of stores extended holiday hours to avoid the rush hours
- Consider taking an adult friend or family member along to help keep you focused on the task ahead of you and to provide extra safety and security
- Let your neighbor or a friend know that you'll be out; this way they can keep an eye on your residence while you are away

On the road

- Obey all traffic rules; because of the holidays there is likely to be more law enforcement officers on the look-out for unsafe drivers
- Be aware of other drivers' actions; many of them are feeling stressed as well so their inattentiveness may increase
- In severe weather conditions, it's a good idea to reduce your speed and increase the distance between you and other cars and pedestrians

Parking lot safety

- Park as close as you can to the front of the store
- Park in a well-lit location
- Be sure to lock your car and take your keys with you (yes, plenty of people still forget to do this)
- Make a mental note of where you are parked so that you don't end up wandering the lot after you're done shopping
- Before heading back out to the parking lot, get your keys out and ready – don't fumble to find them in the parking lot (especially in inclement weather)
- If you see people loitering in the parking lot or your "sixth sense" tells you something is just not right, ask a security officer to escort you to your car
- Keep all valuables (including your new purchases) out of sight; no need to tempt would-be thieves

While shopping

- Keep your wallet with you at all times, never leave it unattended
- When finalizing a purchase with a debit card at the register, be alert for "wandering eyes" that could be trying to get a peek at your PIN code
- Be sure keep track of all your purchased items, unattended bags are a tempting prize an opportunistic thief
- Don't overload yourself with too many bags, periodically store them in the trunk of your car to avoid becoming a possible victim of a purse or bag snatcher

Being able to close out the year safe and secure makes it easier to start the next one with a brighter outlook.

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