

14th December 2021

Keeping Yourself Safe At Christmas

The purpose of this months newsletter is to raise awareness of changing Organised Crime offences during the festive period.

Burglaries

Criminals are aware that during December, people's homes contain a large number of valuable Christmas presents and therefore it is more worth their while to break in and steal those presents.

To protect yourselves leave lights on in the house when out in the evenings. Don't leave presents on show and visible from your front windows.

Lastly, after the excitement of opening your presents on Christmas Day has passed, be mindful when you dispose of your present boxes. By leaving the empty boxes on display by your bins, this actually advertises to burglars the new goods within your home that are worth stealing. It may be worth disposing of those boxes at your local recycling centre.

Theft from cars

Do not leave your Christmas shopping on display within your car, as again, you are just advertising to the thieves that your car is worth breaking into. If your arms are aching from all of the shopping and you want to put it in your car before you start more shopping, place the items in your boot, so as not on display. Also consider re-parking your car, even within the same car park, in case thieves are watching shoppers dropping off presents. By re-parking, they will assume you have finished and driven off with your valuable presents.



If you have any information about possible organised crime, victims of such crime or vulnerable people subject of exploitation, please inform Essex Police or CrimeStoppers on 0800 555111

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Pickpockets

Be wary at large gatherings, such as Christmas markets or even shopping centres, and keep an eye on your possessions. The build up to Christmas is a pickpockets paradise, as their targets are all distracted by shopping, their arms are full of shopping bags and they are not paying attention to their purses or wallets.

Where possible place your purse or wallet in a zipped or buttoned pocket, which makes it harder for a pickpocket to steal.

You could also make use of a purse chain, which is a length of chain that attaches your purse to your handbag or coat. If the purse is grabbed, it can only be taken a short distance before it reaches the end of the chains length. This will then alert you to the attempted theft.



Cybercrime & Frauds

Christmas is a time when criminals will bombard innocent victims with numerous scam emails, telephone calls or text messages.

There are just so many different scams, that it would be impossible to list them all, so here are the main tips as to how to spot them and what to do.

1. Don't ever be rushed into parting with money or you bank details to a cold call. Take 5mins to think about it before acting.
2. Don't click on links within emails / text messages, especially when they state you owe money or "your last payment did not go through". That link will either take you to a fake page or install a virus.
3. Many frauds come from abroad, so check for spelling mistakes or bad grammar.
4. Have you been addressed by your name (Dear Mr Smith) or by your email address (Dear smithy125@email.com), the latter will definitely be a scam.
5. If you are unsure if the email / text / call is genuine, then speak to the company (Amazon, Royal Mail etc..) directly and they will confirm if the call/text is genuine. Remember to obtain a number for the company yourself, do not use one provided within the email or text.



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Nights Out

Christmas is normally a time for parties at nightclubs and pubs, so whilst having fun, also be wary of opportunist thieves who will prey on people who have had a drink, in order to steal their valuables if they are just left unattended on a table.

Drink Spiking

There has been an increase in reported offences of drink spiking, whereby the victims have alcohol or drugs unknowingly added to their drinks. The purpose of this is for the suspect to either steal from or sexually assault the victim.

According to the NHS, the symptoms of having your drink spiked are:

- Lowered inhibitions
- Difficulty concentrating or speaking
- Loss of balance and finding it hard to move
- Visual problems, particularly blurred vision
- Memory loss (amnesia) or 'blackouts'
- Feeling confused or disorientated, particularly after waking up (if you have been asleep)
- Paranoia (a feeling of fear or distrust of others)
- Hallucinations (seeing, hearing or touching things that aren't there) or having an 'out of body experience'
- Nausea and vomiting
- Unconsciousness.



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Ways to prevent your drink being spiked:

- Go to the bar with a friend or group of friends
- Cover your drink
- Don't accept drinks from strangers
- Never leave your drink unattended
- Watch out for changes to your drink
- Don't drink from other people's glasses

What to do if you or a friend are victims of spiking:

- Do not leave the victim alone or let them go home with a stranger
- Tell a member of bar staff or the manager immediately
- Telephone the Police
- Keep the victim talking
- If the victim's condition deteriorates, then seek medical help or call an ambulance

Drink & Drug Driving

There is never an excuse for drink or drug driving, you put your life, that of your passengers and other road users in danger.

If you are found to be drink / drug driving by the Police, then you will be arrested and prosecuted, this will lead to an automatic disqualification from driving and a fine.

How to report possible offences, concerns or to give information?

If you are a victim of, or have any information about any of the above offences, please report this via one of the below methods.

Essex Police via 999 for offences being committed at that time or via 101 or online at www.essex.police.uk

CrimeStoppers in order to give information anonymously — 0800 555 111



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