



IIABA and Trusted Choice® Offer Holiday Shopping Mall Tips

(ALEXANDRIA, VA.) Shopping centers are jammed every holiday season. Stressed-out shoppers, preoccupied drivers, and thieves cause thousands of mall mishaps that cost consumers millions of dollars each year. Holiday shoppers should be particularly cautious about how they protect themselves, where they park, and what they carry because these stores are prime territory for thieves, pickpockets, carjackers and vandals. Maintaining your personal safety at the mall is more important than any holiday gift you will buy there.

The Independent Insurance Agents and Brokers of America (IIABA) and its Trusted Choice® members offer these personal safety tips and others for shoppers this season:

- Carry only one credit card and limited cash, and keep them on your person at all times.
- Avoid identity theft! Avoid using ATMs in the mall, especially non-bank branded ATMs. Be careful about what information you give to store clerks, especially when opening store credit accounts.
- Do not carry too many bags and packages at once. This may make you a prime target for thieves and leaves you more vulnerable to a personal attack. You will be less likely to be able to defend yourself when you are loaded down with bundles.
- Ask mall security to walk you to your car if you feel you are not safe.
- When backing out of a parking spot, be aware of waiting cars, others who are backing out at the same time and motorists who speed through lanes.
- Lock your doors as soon as you get into your car, cover your purchases, or place them out of plain view.
- Park in well-lit areas. If the lot is inadequately lit, complain to management. Retailers and lot owners can be and have been held liable for personal injury in these cases.
- Always have your keys ready when approaching your car and *check the back seat and under the car* before getting in your vehicle!
- Place your packages in the trunk *before* departing one parking lot and driving to another. Waiting until your next shopping destination allows others to see packages go into the trunk of your car and then you departing into the mall or store.
- Review your insurance coverage with your agent. Many offer identity theft protection. In addition, liability coverage will protect you if you hit another motorist, collision will cover the damage to your car, and comprehensive coverage will insure you for damage by vandals or theft of your vehicle.

For more information, or to arrange an interview with a spokesperson, contact Sue Nester, IIABA Broadcast Media Director, (703) 706-5448 or (301) 606-1601 or susan.nester@iiaba.net.

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