

The Belvidere Park District would like to wish you a happy and safe holiday season. The following tips are ways for you to keep safe during the hustle and bustle of this joyous season.

While you are shopping:

- Stay alert and be aware of everything around you. Take a minute to observe who may be watching you .
- Park in a highly visible well-lighted space. It may be daylight when you arrive at a shopping center, but when you come out at 5 or 6 P.M. it will be dark.
- Lock your vehicle both when driving and parked.
- Carry your purse close to your body, not dangling by the straps. Put a wallet in an inside coat or front pants pocket.
- Have your car keys in your hand and be ready to open the car door immediately.
- Place all shopping bags, packages, and gifts out of sight (trunk, under seat).
- Always know where you have parked your car, so you do not spend unnecessary time walking around the parking lot.
- Look inside and under your car before entering.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash – use debit card, credit card, or check.
- Do not overburden yourself with packages. This will help deter pickpockets or purse snatchers.
- Do not park next to a van or truck where people can hide.
- If you take children shopping, teach them to go to a police officer or a store security officer if they get separated or lost. Ensure children know that mommy and daddy would never send a person they did not know to “take them home” or “take them to find mommy or daddy.”

If you are going out for the evening:

- Turn on lights, television, or radio so that it appears that someone is home.
- Lock all doors and windows, even if you plan to be gone for a few minutes.
- Holiday gifts should not be displayed where they can be seen from the outside.

If you plan to travel for the holidays:

- Ask a neighbor to watch your house or apartment and ask them to park in your driveway or space from time to time.
- Use automatic timers for your lights.
- Stop your mail and newspaper deliveries.
- Arrange to have snow shoveled (if necessary) while you are away.

Be safe while you are driving:

- Be alert at intersections and stoplights. They can be favorite spots for people with a criminal intent.
- Keep your car in gear. If you are threatened, blow the horn, and then drive away. Leave enough space between you and the car in front of you to pull around if necessary
- Keep windows rolled up and doors locked at all times.
- Keep valuables (purses, packages, wallets, etc.) out of sight.
- If followed – do not drive home. Go to a police station, fire house, gas station, or other public place.
- If car breaks down, stay with the car and accept NO rides.
- Keep your vehicle well maintained and gassed up.
- When partaking of “holiday cheer,” good judgment is always in order. Remember seat-belts do save lives!

While you are at home:

- Keep all doors and windows locked, even if you step out for a moment.
- Record your valuables as a record of ownership.
- Inspect all holiday lights for frayed wiring before you hang them.
- If you are using a ladder to hang holiday decorations, make sure it is properly secured.
- Keep holiday decorations and plants away from young children and pets. Some are poisonous.
- Place your holiday tree, decorations, etc. away from heating vents or fireplaces to reduce the risk of fire.
- Keep fresh cut holiday greenery watered.
- Use extreme caution when using lighted candles as part of your holiday celebration.
- Beware of strangers coming to the door asking for charitable donations.
 - Ask them four questions:
 1. Can you show some identification,
 2. Is the donation tax deductible,
 3. How will the funds be used,
 4. and May I have a receipt?
- If you are not satisfied with any or all the answers tell them “No, thank you” and close the door. Instead, help by sponsoring a charitable group that has special meaning to you or a loved one.

While you are at the ATM:

- Stay Alert. Be aware of your surroundings when you use an ATM, especially at night. Park in a well-lighted area and have someone accompany you (if possible).
- Report Suspicious People. If you notice anything unusual, cancel your transaction, pocket your card, and leave IMMEDIATELY. Go to a safe place and call police.
- Be Prepared. Have everything ready (deposit slips, card) when arriving at the ATM. When you have completed the transaction, pocket your cash and card immediately. COUNT YOUR CASH AND PUT YOUR CARD AWAY LATER.
- Drive-Up ATM. When using a drive-up ATM, remember to always keep doors locked, all other (except driver's side) windows up, and the car running .
- Treat Your ATM Card Like Cash. Guard your ATM card as carefully as you do cash, debit or credit cards, and checks. Never give account numbers or card information over the phone, unless you know exactly who you are speaking to.
- Keep Your Personal Identification Number (PIN) Secret. Do not write your PIN on your card or keep it written somewhere in your wallet. Never tell anyone your PIN.