



## **NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH NEWS**

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West Valley Senior Lead Office (818) 374-7630  
Sergeant Frank Avila - Sergeant Chris Rowland

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### **HOLIDAY CRIME PREVENTION TIPS**

Shopping during the holiday season can present unique danger. Taking a few preventative measures can help keep your holiday season joyous. The holiday season is a time when busy people can become careless and vulnerable to theft and other holiday crime. We can never be too careful, too prepared or too aware. Please share this information with family, friends and neighbors. The following tips from the Los Angeles Police Department Crime Prevention Section can help you be more careful, prepared and aware during the holiday season.

- Shop during daylight hours whenever possible. If you must shop at night, go with a friend or family member.
- Dress casually and comfortably.
- Avoid wearing expensive jewelry.
- Do not carry a purse or wallet, if possible.
- Always carry your California Driver License or Identification Card along with necessary cash, checks and/or a credit card you expect to use.
- Even though you are rushed and thinking about a thousand things, stay alert to your surroundings.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash.
- Pay for purchases with a check or credit card when possible.
- Keep cash in your front pocket.
- Notify the credit card issuer immediately if your credit card is lost, stolen or misused.
- Keep a record of all of your credit card numbers in a safe place at home.
- Be extra careful if you do carry a wallet or purse. They are the prime targets of criminals in crowded shopping areas, transportation terminals, bus stops, on buses and other rapid transit.
- Avoid overloading yourself with packages. It is important to have clear visibility and freedom of motion to avoid mishaps.
- Beware of strangers approaching you for any reason. At this time of year, "con-artists" may try various methods of distracting you with the intention of taking your money or belongings.

The Los Angeles Police Department West Valley Area wishes you a safe, happy and peaceful upcoming holiday season.

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**Contact Officer Trulik for information on the next Encino Neighborhood Watch Meeting.**

## **DRIVING:**

- Avoid driving alone or at night.
- Keep all car doors locked and windows closed while in or out of your car.
- If you must shop at night, park in a well-lighted area.
- Avoid parking next to vans, trucks with camper shells, or cars with tinted windows.
- Never leave your car unoccupied with the motor running or with children inside.
- Do not leave packages on the seat of your car. This creates a temptation for thieves.
- When approaching and leaving your vehicle be aware of your surroundings.
- Do not approach your car alone if there are suspicious people in the area.
- Ask mall or store security for an escort before leaving your shopping location.

## **LAKE BALBOA:**

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**Contact Officer Ham or Officer Olivares for information on the next Lake Balboa Neighborhood Watch Meetings.**

## **HOSTING A PARTY:**

- Have non-alcoholic beverages available for party guests.
- Find alternative transportation for intoxicated guests.
- Arrange for an official designated driver for your party who will not drink at all.

## **ATTENDING A PARTY:**

- Have something to eat before consuming alcoholic beverages.
- Eat high protein foods that will stay in your stomach longer and slow the absorption of alcohol into your system.
- Remember only time will eliminate the alcohol from your body.
- Know your safe limit.
- **NEVER** drink and drive.

## **RESEDA:**

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**Next Neighborhood Watch Meeting – Holiday Potluck - Thursday, December 13 - 7:00 p.m.**  
**Ann Kinzle Community Room located in the West Valley Community Police Station**

## **AT HOME:**

- Be extra cautious about locking doors and windows when you leave the house, even for a few minutes.
- When leaving home for an extended time, have a neighbor or family member watch your house and pick up your newspapers and mail.
- Indoor and outdoor lights should be on an automatic timer.
- Leave a radio or television on so the house looks and sounds occupied.
- Large displays of holiday gifts should not be visible through the windows and doors of your home.
- When setting up a Christmas tree or other holiday display, make sure doors and passageways are clear inside your home.
- Be sure your Christmas tree is mounted on a sturdy base so children, elderly persons or family pets cannot pull it over on themselves.
- If you use lights on your Christmas tree ensure the wiring is not damage or frayed. Frayed or damaged wiring can cause a fire.
- If you use lights on your Christmas tree ensure the wiring is not damaged or frayed. Frayed or damaged wiring can cause a fire.
- Place your Christmas tree in water or wet sand to keep it green.
- Never place wrapping paper in your fireplace.

## **TARZANA:**

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**Contact Officer Scoggins for information on the next Tarzana Neighborhood Watch Meeting.**

## **STRANGERS AT YOUR DOOR:**

- Be aware that criminals sometimes pose as couriers delivering gifts.
- It is not uncommon for criminals to take advantage of the generosity of people during the holiday season by soliciting donations door-to-door for charitable causes although no charity is involved.
- Ask for their identification, and find out how the donated funds will be used.
- If you are not satisfied, do not donate.
- Donate to a recognized charitable organization.

## Charity Scams

Fortunately, many people like to give with an open heart to help others in need.

Unfortunately, that means we've created a climate that's ripe for fake charity scams and scam artists. They know they can tug at our heartstrings -- and rake in the cash.

Fake charity scams often set up quasi-legitimate agencies so that, at first glance, they look real; they may also name themselves something similar to other legitimate charities.

They may even carry 'ID' in the name of the charity, complete with a logo.

These scam artists use all of the standard methods to collect "donations" for their charity scams -- tables at the local mall, going door-to-door, email, and telemarketing.

All this makes charity scams harder to spot. However, here are 10 tips to help spot charity scams:

1. BE WARY of every opportunity that presents itself -- especially when it presents itself in the wake of some big disaster that gets lots of media attention.
2. Ask for the name, address, and phone number of the charity -- and whether or not it is registered. If the presenters claim that it is registered, get a registration number. The Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Alliance offers information about national charities; you can call (703) 276-0100 or go to their website:

<http://www.give.org>

If you're trying to figure out whether or not some particular charity is worthy of support, check out this section of the site:

<http://www.give.org/reports/index.asp>

They publish their standards for rating charities, and then rate over 600 different charities using these standards.

3. Verify with the office of the charity that there is indeed a campaign going on, or that they've authorized the charity drive that you're being invited to contribute to.
4. Don't ever donate cash if you can help it. Write a check to the charity -- not to the person standing in front of you. This also helps you document the donation for your records and for your tax return. And don't give out bank information!
5. Ask what percentage of your donation goes directly to the cause. Legitimate charities will have ready answers because they are used to the question.
6. Get a receipt with the name of the charity on it.
7. Be especially cautious about getting a charity donation request by email. Most legitimate charities don't use email for their solicitations. (Some legitimate charities will email people who have donated before -- but never respond to requests where you've never donated.)
8. Be especially wary about charities that claim to be raising funds for the local police or firefighters. Check with them first!
9. Don't give in to pressure or "guilt trips" about "suggested donations" or 'requested minimum contributions.' Once you've determined that the charity is legitimate and you've decided you want to contribute, simply give what you can and want to give -- it will be appreciated.
10. The best way we know of to avoid charity scams is to decide **IN ADVANCE** (while you're doing your annual or monthly budget) which charities you'll support and **CONTACT THEM**. Then you can gracefully turn anyone else down who comes your way with hat in hand.