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Palmetto Bay Issues Holiday Safety Tips

Policing Unit Shares Insights on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim of Crime During Shopping Season

PALMETTO BAY, Fla., (Nov. 25, 2008) – Palmetto Bay Mayor Eugene P. Flinn and Village Policing Unit Commander Gregory Truitt jointly released Palmetto Bay's annual summary of Holiday Shopping Safety Tips today. One very important measure from the list: "Don't put up a fight if you are being robbed... material items can be replaced – your life cannot."

According to Mayor Flinn, "Shopping during the holiday season can present unique dangers. By taking a few preventive steps, you can keep your holiday season joyous and crime free."

Commander Truitt echoed the mayor by adding, "Past experience has shown there is typically an increase in burglaries and petty crimes this time of year. That is why we encourage our residents to be more careful, more aware, and prepared during the holiday season."

Following is the full text of the 2008 Palmetto Bay Holiday Shopper Safety Guide:

- Shop during daylight hours whenever possible. If you must shop at night, go with a friend or family member. Always let someone know where you are going and when you plan to return.
- Dress casually and comfortably.
- Avoid wearing expensive jewelry.
- Do not carry a purse or wallet, if possible.
- Start your shopping day with a full tank of gas. This will keep you from having to make an unscheduled stop.
- Always carry your Florida 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. Use Travelers checks, if they are lost or stolen, they can be replaced.
- 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.
- Most malls and major department stores have security guards or hire off duty police officers. You can always ask for an escort to your vehicle.
- Beware of strangers approaching you for any reason. At this time of year, con-artists and professional pick pockets may try various methods of distracting you with the intention of taking your money or belongings. Usually one person will distract you (ask you about a product or garment), while the other removes contents from your purse or shopping bag. Another method is called "crowding," which occurs in-between the racks of clothes, when two or more people will crowd in close to you and again remove items from your shopping bags or purse.
- If you have made a large purchase (computer or jewelry), take a minute to look around you before you get into your vehicle. Criminals in the past have slashed tires on vehicles... when the driver gets out to fix the flat, they get robbed.
- Have your vehicle keys in your hand ready to enter your vehicle. Don't get distracted looking for your keys.
- Always place items in your trunk, if this is not possible, bring a towel or blanket with you to cover up your purchases.
- If you do go home after shopping be aware of vehicles following you. If you believe a vehicle is following you, immediately call 9-1-1, stay on main roads (US-1, Kendall Drive, I-95), and do not get off.
- If you are hosting a holiday party at your residence, be aware of who your guests are, and who your guests may have invited.
- When the holidays are over, try not to put out empty cardboard boxes for trash pickup advertising to the criminals what you purchased. If possible, bag up all empty boxes.
- If you are being robbed, GIVE UP YOUR PROPERTY. Do not fight. Your material items can be replaced – your life cannot.
- If you have been robbed or witness suspicious behavior – no matter how seemingly insignificant – do not delay calling the police (911). The perpetrators may still be in the area and/or engaged in a similar action against another unsuspecting victim. An immediate call can lead to an immediate apprehension.

If you have any questions regarding these Holiday Safety Tips or for general information, please call the **Village of Palmetto Bay Policing Unit's** non-emergency line at 305-259-1270. For emergencies, always dial 9-1-1.

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*Incorporated in 2002, **The Village of Palmetto Bay** is a vibrant community of 25,000 residents nestled between Biscayne Bay and So. Dixie Highway, about 15 miles south of downtown Miami. The Village is governed by a five-member Council and operates under a Council-Manager form of government. Dubbed "The Village of Parks," Palmetto Bay offers an extensive system of attractive parks, unique recreational opportunities, and bay access. It also is home to several excellent public schools, and a robust commercial corridor along Dixie Highway offering a diverse range of restaurants, markets, and lodging. Specifically, the Village extends from the centerline of SW 136 St., south to the centerline of SW 184 St., expanding west to the centerline of South Dixie Highway (including the center island), and east to Biscayne Bay. Visit us at www.palmettobay-fl.gov.*