KERN COUNTY ELDER NEWS

Monthly Information Article | Kern County DEAR/EDRT TEAM*
*(Dependent/Elder Abuse Review) Team/EDRT (Elder Death Review Team)

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SENIOR HOLIDAY SAFETY

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Tis the season!!! Another year has flown by and here we are at holiday time once again. This issue is dedicated to Senior Holiday Safety. As the craziness and hustle bustle of the season can overwhelm us, we also can get cavalier about safety with all the excitement in the air.

Stay safe while shopping at stores and malls. Avoid driving in bad weather. Although most of Kern County doesn't see snow, outlying areas do. We also often see fog during the holiday season. Sometimes, and let's hope as we really need it, there is rain during this time of year as well. Wait for the weather to be more cooperative until you venture out. Quite often the fog will lift by lunch time and the rain or snow will taper off after a short time as well. Make sure your vehicle is in top running condition. Make sure tires are properly aired and there is plenty of gas in the vehicle. Don't engage aggressive drivers.

Once you have arrived at your destination, park as close to the business as possible. Have patience when searching for a parking spot. Be cautious of drivers that accelerate to get the only spot available. Don't be that driver either. Make sure to not have packages and valuables visible. If you return to your vehicle with packages and need to go into another store, consider moving your vehicle in case someone is watching cars for unattended items. Lock your car and make a note where you are parked.

When returning to the vehicle have your keys or fob out. As you are approaching, look all around the vehicle making sure no one is loitering around. Be aware of increased pedestrian and vehicle traffic especially at this busy time of year.

Put cash in several areas on your person so you are not taking out large amounts of cash when paying for your items. Keep purses and wallets close

Agency Partners

- Bakersfield Police Department
- California Dept. of Financial Protection & Innovation
- California Dept. of Insurance
- CSUB
- Dept. of Social Services Licensing
- GBLA
- Independent Living Center of KC
- Kaiser Permanente
- Kern Co. Aging & Adult
- Kern Co. BHRS
- Kern Co. Coroner
- Kern Co. District Attorney
- Kern Co. DA Victim Services
- Kern Co. Family Law Facilitator
- Kern Co. Public Health
- Kern Regional Center
- Kern Co. Sheriff's Office
- Kern Co. Veterans Service Dept.
- Social Security Admin.
- Strata Credit Union

to your body. A cross-body purse or fanny bag is a good selection when shopping as they are snug to your body. Keep a wallet in a front pocket or in a coat.

Always be vigilant of your surroundings. Trust your instincts and if you feel something is not right, go to store personnel or a security person right away. You can always ask to be escorted to your vehicle.

Use the buddy system and go shopping with a friend or family member. Try to shop during daylight hours when the stores are less crowded.

If public transportation is your mode of travel, be familiar with the schedule and be aware of an alternate route home. Stay vigilante while traveling on public transportation. Sit up front close to the driver.

When shopping online be sure to set up accounts with strong passwords that you will remember or have written down in a safe place. Don't click on unreliable links that come in emails or on social media sites. This is a common way to scam people. Use only secure websites and shop with known retailer sites you are familiar with. Make sure the website says "https" and not "http." The "s" means the site is more secure and safer to use. Familiarize yourself with the business' return policy. Don't give out passwords or PIN numbers. This also holds true for your Medicare and/or Social Security numbers. Avoid using debit cards for online purchases as reimbursements for misuse may be less than that of credit cards.

Don't use public Wi-Fi to make purchase as your personal information is much easier to hack. Use a Virtual Personal Network (VPN) so sensitive information is much less likely to be intercepted. Make certain that there's a lock icon within the site as well to make sure it is secure.

When giving online, be extra careful that it is indeed the organization you want to donate or contribute to and that you are familiar with. Be aware of sites that have an automatic payment option.

Use a credit card instead of a debit card. If your account is compromised, you may not be as protected for loss as with a credit care. Using one credit card will minimize headaches and loss should the account be hacked. Don't let your credit card out of your sight. A common way for identity theft to occur is for the criminal to swipe your card for your purchase and then "skim" the card with another device.

Look over bank and account statements frequently for suspicious activity. With increased activity during the holiday season, it is quite easy and common for the fraudster to add several unauthorized charges that slip by you. Contact banks and credit card companies right away for charges that don't appear to be legitimate or your own.

When leaving your home whether for a few hours or for several days or weeks, there are several things you can do to help prevent a break in. Have timers turn on and off lights in a few rooms. Another good tactic is to leave a radio on a Newstalk Station as this creates the illusion that there are people in the home talking. Radio and televisions can be placed on a timer as well to have varying times when there is sound in the home. It makes your home look occupied. Most burglars do not want anyone home and take advantage when they believe no one is in the home. Have someone pick up your mail and newspapers if gone more than a day or two. Better yet, have a trusted house sitter stay at your home. Ask your neighbor to park in your driveway while you are gone.

Break down large cardboard boxes for items such a new televisions, computers, or other expensive purchases. Leaving high dollar item boxes visible lets thieves know there are new expensive things in your home.

Keep important papers and valuables in a home safe. If possible, have someone bolt the safe to the floor, making it nearly impossible to walk away with.

Lastly, don't post on social media or leave a calendar visible that you will be gone. This is an open invitation that the thieves are waiting for.

On behalf of the all the DEAR Partners and the Kern County District Attorney's Office, we wish all of you the happiest and safest of holiday seasons.

Sources:

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