



# JUST ASKING

BY MARY KLEST

## What security tips are the Barrington Police giving residents during the holiday season?

I asked police Officer John Burke, who is assigned to crime prevention and investigations.

Burke has been patrolling the streets of Barrington for 10 years. He says while the holidays are a time of good cheer and generous giving, they can create opportunities for crime due to the shopping season and homeowners being away. Below are some security tips to follow.

Stay aware of your surroundings and report suspicious activity. A cause for concern is what Burke calls "the lurking person." This is someone loitering on the street or in a shop watching what you purchase. "Don't hesitate to call the police. We're here to help," Burke says.

Limit the amount of cash you carry and bring only one or two credit/debit cards with you when shopping. Keep your purse or wallet close to your body. Don't leave it in a shopping cart, a counter, or your car. Burke says would-be thieves scout parking lots and stores, ready to act quickly when an unsuspecting person lets their guard down. If you need to get cash from an ATM, avoid nighttime hours (most robberies at ATMs occur after 7 p.m.). Find one located inside a store or one that has proper lighting in a populated area.

Always lock your car, keep windows shut, and set the alarm when parked. Burke says it's difficult to solve car burglaries unless the owner has serial numbers for the items stolen. "One woman left her wedding photos on the front seat of her car. For whatever reason, they were stolen."

PHOTO: MARY KLEST



BARRINGTON POLICE OFFICER JOHN BURKE

If you are going away for the holidays, call the police department and register for a vacation house watch. They won't pick up mail or newspapers, or clear the snow off driveways, but they will patrol the area and notify you of any problems. Don't leave a spare key outside. Thieves know where to look. "All residents should make sure their address number is clearly marked and near a light," Burke says.

Install secondary locks on windows and doors. "Criminals work on the main locking device. If they can't get in that way, they may give up," he says. He offers advice for residents without home alarm systems. "Keep your car key in the bedroom at night. If something suspicious happens, press the alarm button to scare the would-be intruder and call the police."

Break down gift boxes and put them in garbage containers — no need to advertise your new television set curbside.

Finally, those who give and attend holiday parties are responsible for adhering to the law. "There's no shame in taking away car keys from someone who has been drinking too much," Burke says. "People will ask us to give them a break because it's the holidays but everything we do, we do for a reason. Speeding or drunk driving causes accidents no matter what time of year."

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