



## LANCASTER CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT

# NEWS RELEASE

City of Lancaster  
Bureau of Police, 39 West Chestnut Street, Lancaster, Pa. 17603  
[www.lancasterpolice.com](http://www.lancasterpolice.com)

Author: Sgt. Timothy Frey

Contact Number: (717) 735-3300

Date: November 28, 2011

### Holiday Prevention Tips

You can expect charities to be out in full force this holiday season, but before donating any money, verify that the charity is legitimate through the Pennsylvania Department of State (PDoS). Not only can you verify legitimate charities, but operating expenses are listed along with administrative costs. In other words, you learn how much of your donation goes toward administrative fees and salaries and what actually goes toward the people the charity is designed to help, information even Ebenezer Scrooge would appreciate. The phone number for the PDoS is (800) 732-0999, and their website is: [http://web.dos.state.pa.us/cgi-bin/Charities/char\\_form.cgi](http://web.dos.state.pa.us/cgi-bin/Charities/char_form.cgi)

Lottery tickets make great stocking stuffers, but only the Grinch sends fraudulent lottery letters. These letters often advertise a cash prize; however, the recipient must provide personal information or send funds (often by wire service) in order to secure the prize. Legitimate lotteries do not operate this way. Although the letter may seem to be personalized, it is merely a mass computer mailing. The best thing to do with this letter is throw it out.

If you must travel over the river and through the woods to get to grandma's house, then chances are she lives on a rural mail route. A locking mailbox (\$40-\$65 at local home improvement stores) will prevent grandma from becoming a victim of identity or mail theft. Locking mailboxes allow the mail carrier to deposit mail through a spring-loaded flap and only the homeowner can remove the mail with a key. Grandma lives in a row house? No worries, you can purchase a locking mailbox that mounts next to the front door.

Grandparents love to see pictures of the grand kids, but they also love to see who is at the front door. A wide angle peep hole (\$10-\$15 at home improvement stores) provides a large view of anyone in front of and beside the door. This type of peep hole can easily be installed in wood and metal doors.

Have a hard-to-shop-for person on your list? A paper shredder (available at office supply stores starting at \$25) prevents personal identifiable information (such as account numbers, social security numbers and credit card information) from finding their way into the trash resulting in potential identity theft. Strip shredders are good, cross-cut shredders are even better. If nothing less the shredders are great for stripping the ends of ribbons for wrapping presents.

When Santa makes his trip Christmas Eve can he see your house? If you have no exterior lighting then don't assume you made the naughty list. Motion detector and dusk-to-dawn activated exterior lighting illuminate areas



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such as walkways, front porches, patios and back yards. Compact Fluorescent Lighting (CFL) features many designs such as dimming bulbs and flood lights. Light Emitting Diode (LED) bulbs, a newer technology, feature a longer-lasting, softer glow and cool-to-the-touch fixture. LED's also use much less electricity.

Santa isn't the only person who will be out Christmas Eve. Emergency services will be standing-by in the event of an emergency, but they can't find you quickly if they can't see your house number. If your house number isn't easily identifiable then perhaps it's time for new numbers. Make sure they are large enough to be seen from the street and not obscured by shrubbery or trees.

Do you plan on rockin' around the Christmas tree away from home this year? Then invest in simple plug-in timers (\$11 and up at local home improvement stores) for your interior lights. Burglars avoid homes that appear occupied so in addition to living areas, make sure you put a light in the bathroom and basement. Be sure to draw the shades so potential burglars can't see inside. In addition, make arrangements for someone to shovel snow and neighbors to park in your driveway.

Santa uses the chimney, but burglars use a flimsy door or window. Are yours secure? Do the doors have secure deadbolts that extend at least one inch into the door frame? Do the windows lock? Although all of your doors and windows are important, burglars like to try to get in the back where they can't be seen, so pay special attention to that area.

Is that new flat screen TV a few of your favorite things? Don't advertise your new electronics or other new valuables that you have just received by putting the boxes out on the curb for the garbage collectors. Break the boxes down and fold them to where the words are on the inside. Better yet-RECYCLE.

Find a new digital camera in your stocking? Instead of taking pictures of your finger or the floor, take detailed pictures of your valuables, to include model and serial numbers. Keep a separate spreadsheet detailing the make, model, serial number, value and estimated date of purchase. Make a copy of the digital photos and spreadsheet onto a CD or flash drive and keep in a safe place. Give a copy to a close friend or relative in the event yours is destroyed. Should the items ever be lost due to theft, fire or flood you won't have to pout or cry, but can rest assured that you have a detailed record for reporting purposes.

Display cases are meant for department stores, not your vehicle. Keep purses, GPS, digital music players,



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satellite radios, cameras and computers out of plain view. Secure them in the trunk or glove compartment. But before you do that, did you photograph and record their serial numbers?

Holidays bring family members together who sometimes should be kept apart. Add alcohol to the mix and you have the ingredients for a visit from the police. Either limit the family or limit the alcohol. We'd prefer you stay inside your house rather than ours.

The Lancaster City Police Department wishes you a HAPPY and CRIME SAFE holiday season.

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