

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Shop safely this holiday season

Burnaby, November 28, 2008: Attention to personal safety is a necessity in our hectic lives but with the approach of the Christmas shopping season the BC Crime Prevention Association has reissued some tips to make shopping a safer and happier experience.

Unfortunately, the Christmas season is a draw for criminals who see these situations as opportunities to take advantage of consumers and remember; criminals have Christmas shopping lists too!

“Shoppers need to develop a personal safety radar” says Valerie MacLean, Executive Director; “they should constantly be aware of what is happening around them, especially behind them.” She adds: “with the current economic downturn more people become desperate for money and there is the potential for more crime.”

- Before setting out remove from your wallet or purse any credit cards and other valuable identification that you will not need – it’s all about risk reduction
- When using an ATM or withdrawing cash at a bank wicket, make sure you safely store money beneath your clothing in a fanny pack or front pocket – do not leave the ATM/bank with cash visible in your hand
- Use a credit card for your purchases as this gives you recourse in case there are problems later with your purchase and chargeback protection
- At the cash register make sure you get your own credit card back and receipts for your purchase and if you use a debit card – PROTECT YOUR PIN! – be aware of anyone watching you enter your PIN
- When your shopping is complete, check your bank account and credit card balances on a regular basis – the sooner you become aware of unauthorized transactions the sooner you can alert your financial institution or credit card issuer to rectify the problem
- Shopping malls are full of people doing the same thing as you but watch for pickpockets – crowded stores and Food Courts are perfect places for theft of wallets and purses left unguarded
- Be aware of the risk of purse snatchings – remember that your personal safety comes first. Don’t put yourself at further risk by fighting with a purse snatcher – it’s not worth it
- Be especially careful about leaving purses and wallets exposed in shopping carts – the risk of theft is high when you turn your back or you are otherwise distracted

- Be alert to distraction theft – watch for pairs of individuals who have a routine of distracting you to facilitate theft
- Wherever you are don't leave purses or wallets open or unzipped
- Plan to leave your heaviest purchases to the last but don't be so overburdened with packages that you leave yourself vulnerable to theft – better to store some purchases in your car and continue shopping with greater freedom
- Do not leave gifts on the back seat of your car or clearly visible from the outside. It is a good practice to store purchases in the trunk – out of sight and out of mind. If your trunk is so equipped, disengage the latch so that if a thief breaks into your car he cannot push the dashboard trunk release
- Have a shopping plan so that you are better organized – this reduces the risk of forgetfulness and keeps you focused upon your personal safety
- There is safety in numbers – take a companion with you if possible as this will significantly reduce the risk of theft. Women especially are advised to have a male companion
- Always carry a cell phone so that you have quick access to emergency services

From time to time, the BC Crime Prevention Association offers advice under its *Crime Shield* banner to give the public the tools they need through education and awareness to protect themselves against crime.

-30 -

Media Contacts:

Valerie MacLean
Executive Director
BC Crime Prevention Association
604-291-9959 Ext.226
v.maclea@bccpa.org

Jeff Burton
Manager Programs & Projects
BC Crime Prevention Association
604-291-9959 Ext.234
j.burton@bccpa.org