



# 'Tis the Season Holiday Safety Tips



As you prepare for the holiday season, keep these tips in mind for celebrating safely and festively.

## Online Shopping

- When shopping online, always research the product you are buying, along with the reputation and privacy policies of the company you are purchasing from. Before providing any personal or payment information, ensure the webpage you are on is secure - look for a padlock icon in the upper right corner and the <https://> in the address line.
- **NOTE:** Visit the Resources section of [www.bccpa.org](http://www.bccpa.org) for additional tip sheets on *Safe Online Shopping* and *Fraud Prevention – Online Shopping Tips*.

## A Day at the Mall

- If you must use your vehicle to go shopping, park somewhere well-lit or in well-travelled areas. If you store your purchases in your car, make sure they are in the trunk or not visible from outside of the vehicle. Be aware of individuals who may be following you or loitering in parking lots – alert mall or the store security of someone does.
- If you bring children shopping, limit the excursion to two to three hours. Make sure children are rested and fed before heading out. Keep children close at all times, do not let them wander around unsupervised. Point out security guards or meeting places, so your child knows where to go for help if they get lost or separated. Never use a video arcade or toy stores as a baby sitter; predators are always on the prowl for unattended children.
- Keep watch of your personal belongings at all times - don't leave your purse unattended
- If paying for purchases using debit or credit cards, try not to take your eyes off your card when the sales clerk is handling it. Make sure your card is only swiped once. If your card has a *tap to pay* feature enabled, make sure you only either tap the card for payment or use the swipe/insert feature, not both.

## Celebrating

- Whether you are a guest or a host, have a plan in advance to prevent drinking and driving. Determine who the designated drivers in your group will be or have a plan to take public transit or taxis ahead of time.
- As a host, consider limiting your own drinking in order to be more aware of how much your guests are drinking. Provide guests with non-alcoholic beverage options. Be aware of how much alcohol you are serving and alcohol being brought in by guests.
- If you believe one of your guests is too drunk to drive, ask them for their keys and call them a cab; alternatively, stay with them until they are sober or offer them a spare bed for the night. If you are unable to stop someone who should not be driving, you will need to call the police - it may be difficult to do when it's a friend, but the potential for serious or deadly harm is a possibility if they get behind the wheel.
- Make use of Operation Red Nose, a service available in many communities across the country aimed at preventing drinking and driving - volunteers will pick up you and your vehicle and get you home safely.

## Decking the Halls

- Do not let your home be a target for potential thieves by letting them know what gifts Santa has brought. If your Christmas tree is visible from the outside, do not place gifts under the tree until the last minute. Once presents have been unwrapped, consider taking boxes for things such as computers, electronics and televisions straight to recycling yourself versus leaving them on the curb.
- Choose a freshly cut tree with green, hard to pull back needles. Always keep the tree stand filled with water. Do not position the tree near heat sources, such as candles, fireplaces or heaters. Carefully follow the manufacturer's instructions for installing and maintaining lights. Inspect strands of lights and replace damaged parts before using lights. Do not overload extension cords.

## Travelling

- When travelling by vehicle, travel during daytime hours, check road conditions at [www.DriveBC.ca](http://www.DriveBC.ca) and weather conditions before you set out. Use well-travelled roads when possible. Ensure your vehicle is in good mechanical condition and you have appropriate winter tires for the route you are travelling. Have a cell phone and car charger for emergencies – be aware cell phones may have limited reception in mountainous and isolated areas. Keep an emergency kit, with extra blankets, water and food in your vehicle. Advise someone of your travel route and times you plan on leaving home and arriving at your destination - check-in with that person when you arrive at your destination so they know you arrived safely.
- The holiday season is a busy travel period. If using other modes of transportation, allow extra time to get to the airport, bus depot or train station. Allow extra time to check-in and proceed through security where applicable.
- Do not advertise that you will be away. Make your home look lived in, have a friend or neighbour visit your home often to check on things and pick up mail or anything that may be left at your door. Install timers for your lights. Cancel newspapers or arrange for someone to bring them in for you. Avoid advertising your plans of being away from home in social media, such as Facebook and Twitter.