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## NEWS RELEASE

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### PREVENTING CRIME DURING THE HOLIDAY SEASON

The holidays are here! The busiest time of year is again upon us. Don't let the hectic pace of the season keep you from using good judgment and common sense. Not doing so can expose you, your vehicle and maybe even your home to the whims of a thief.

The old expression about not reinventing the wheel has a lot of validity, and you have probably heard some of these things before. Nevertheless, the topic is far too important not to repeat. Protecting yourself, your family and your belongings doesn't have to be difficult, inconvenient or expensive. Sometimes all that is needed is a reminder.

The Vernon Hills Police Department's Crime Prevention Unit has the following simple suggestions to help improve your security, both at home and away, during the holiday season:

#### WHEN PARKING –

- Try to park in well-lit areas.
- Always close the windows and lock your car, even if you will be back in "just a minute."
- Hide small valuables in the glove compartment or under the seat (iPods, GPS units, radars, laptops and purses are just what a thief wants to see in easy reach). Lock larger items in the trunk or cover them up. Regardless of what may be in them, shopping bags are a giveaway to a thief and even the smallest items are a temptation. In other words, do not make your vehicle an attractive target.

#### WHEN SHOPPING –

- Try to avoid carrying large amounts of cash.
- Stay alert and be aware of what's going on around you.
- If you carry a purse, keep it close to your body, in front of you where you can see it, and cover the clasp or flap with your hand or forearm. Never carry open-weave bags or purses without flaps or zippers. Those are easy marks for pickpockets. Never leave your purse unattended, even for a moment while you look at something on a store shelf - that's all the time it takes for a thief to grab your wallet.

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- Men should carry their wallets in an inside coat pocket or side pants pocket, not in the rear pants pocket.
- Never overburden yourself with packages. Being loaded down may make it difficult for you to keep track of your purse or wallet or to respond to a situation. It may take a little more time, but the best thing is to make an extra trip to your vehicle's trunk.
- If you are shopping with children, hold their hand as much as possible. Tell them if they get separated from you, they should go to a security guard or store clerk and say they are lost. Make sure they understand to never go into the parking lot to look for you or your car.

#### PROTECTING YOUR HOME –

- Take an extra minute to make sure that the doors and windows are locked before going out. Once again, do this even if you will be gone for only a short time.
- Leave lights and/or a radio on so that it looks like someone is home. The installation of inexpensive timers can assist with this.
- If you are going out of town, there are several things that you should do before you leave. First of all, make sure to install at least one of the aforementioned light timers. Also, ask a relative or friend to watch your home and, if they haven't been stopped, to bring in the mail and newspapers promptly. Ask them to move the curtains periodically to make your home look "lived in." Make arrangements to have the snow shoveled (a snow-covered driveway and sidewalk is an obvious sign that no one is home).
- Finally, remember that most police departments offer a free vacation watch in which your home will be checked periodically while you are away. Call your police department and ask if this service is available.

Let's make this a happy and safe holiday season!

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