Tips for a Happy and Safe Holiday Season

This holiday season, don't let the spirit of giving lull you into giving burglars and thieves a chance to do their dirty work. Crooks love the holidays as much as everyone else, but chiefly because it's an opportune time for crime. Here are some tips on how to celebrate safely this holiday season:

AT HOME
Be extra cautious about locking doors and windows when you leave your apartment. Don't display holiday gifts where they can be seen from a window or doorway. If you go out for the evening, turn on lights and a radio or television so the house or apartment appears to be occupied.

Immediately after the holidays, mark new gifts with an identification number and record new serial numbers. The UTSA Police Department can engrave your items for free. Use only fire resistant ornaments on a holiday tree and make sure electric lights are in good working order. Avoid leaving boxes from purchases (especially TV's, computers, etc.) out on the curb for trash pickup. Never connect more than one extension cord together for holiday lights to avoid fire hazards.

IF YOU'RE SHOPPING
Stay alert and be aware of what's going on around you. Park in a well-lighted space, and be sure to lock the car, and hide shopping bags and gifts in the trunk. Avoid carrying large amounts of cash; pay with a check or credit card whenever possible. Avoid overloading yourself with packages. It is important to have clear visibility and freedom of motion to avoid mishaps.

Beware of strangers approaching you for any reason. At this time of year, "con-artists" may try various methods of distracting you with the intention of taking your money or belongings. Plan your shopping/errands so that you don't load your trunk until you are ready to drive to another destination. Load your trunk when you leave a location — never open a trunk, fill it full of valuables, close it, and then just walk away to do more shopping or other errands. Shop with friends or relatives if possible; there IS safety in numbers.

HOLIDAY PARTY SAFETY
Have non-alcoholic beverages available for party guests. Serve something to eat before serving alcoholic beverages. Take a mental note and do a last call at a scheduled time. Whenever you do this, take all alcohol away from your bar area and secure it.

Last but not least, don't let holiday stress get the best of your holiday spirit. Make time to get together with family, friends, and neighbors. And think about reaching out in the spirit of the season and helping someone who is less fortunate or lonely. Do your part to make the holidays a safe and happy time for everybody—except criminals.

References: National Crime Prevention Council, LAPD Crime Prevention Section, Parents.com & www.thecenter.ucla.edu/

UTSAPD Meets With Community in Town Hall Meeting

On November 19, 2009 the UTSA Police Department held its first Town Hall Meeting on the Main Campus. The goal of the meeting was to get feedback from the UTSA community, to share our Department vision, mission and guiding principles and to have an open discussion of current safety issues. The event was free and open to the UTSA community and was attended by students, faculty and staff members.

After opening remarks by Acting Chief Dan Pena, safety issues that were discussed included how UTSA PD would respond to an active shooter situation, how the police department responds to a major incident or if an emergency happens on campus and what can be done to improve lighting on campus at night.

Acting Chief Pena also led a discussion on the future of UTSAPD programs that included: Expansion of the existing community policing program, to continue the addition of security equipment in parking lots and buildings, expansion of the notification capabilities of Reverse 911 and Giant Voice systems and to conduct town hall meetings each semester to include the Downtown Campus.
UTSA PD Officers Participate in NRA LE Competition

Three UTSAPD officers participated in the NRA Tactical Police Competition on November 14, 2009. Corporal Barerra and Officers Gallegos and Torres attended the competition. The NRA Tactical Police Competition encourages police officers to gain more experience and training on the range.

The competition consisted of several courses of fire developed to place the officer in situations such as Skill-Based Courses (challenges the officer’s overall proficiency) or Scenario-Based Courses (a hypothetical law enforcement encounter). Each course is designed to challenge the officer’s skills in the use of their duty firearms and equipment. Some of the challenges include: assessing threat and non-threat targets; firing from unusual shooting positions; making tactical decisions; and balancing the need for accuracy with speed.

The competition consisted of over 100 officers from various departments to include: Corpus Christi PD, San Antonio PD as well as corporate sponsored sharp shooters. UTSAPD officers individually placed in the top half of the “Tactical” class against area SWAT officers. Ofc. Gallegos said “Thanks to everyone who supported this shooting team to train and compete. I look forward to sharing new training ideas gained from this experience and to next year’s competition.”

Employee Kudos: Dispatcher Monica Garcia and Guard Priscilla Trevino helped a professor who had a dead battery in his car. He praised PCO Garcia for her handling of his telephone call and stated that Guard Trevino was “very courteous and amazing.” Way to go!

Crime Prevention Tip: Here are a few tips for this Holiday Season: 1) Don’t display holiday gifts where they can be seen from a window or doorway. Store gifts before you go away on a holiday trip. 2) Lock your packages and gifts in your vehicle’s trunk. Keep your vehicle’s doors locked and windows closed.

Holiday Road Safety Tips to Get You Home Safely

The holidays are almost here and you know what that means -- the kickoff to holiday travel is about to begin. An estimated 33 million people nationwide will be traveling over this long holiday season, with Thanksgiving one of the most traveled holidays of the year.

To help you prepare for the Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year’s travel ahead, we have listed some helpful holiday travel tips to help get you to and from your family gatherings safely.

Check road conditions and weather reports
While the weather and roads look OK in your neighborhood that may not be the case 200 miles away. Check the latest weather to find out the conditions of the roads you will be traveling on.

Winter driving essentials
It is a good idea to pack an emergency travel kit, which should include a flashlight, blankets, booster cables, flares, emergency triangles and a first aid kit. While you may never have to use these items, you will be happy you packed them in the event of an emergency.

Winter checklist
Make sure to have a certified mechanic check your oil level, tire pressure, windshield wipers, heater, defroster, antifreeze and brakes before you head out on the roads.

Buckle up
Thanksgiving weekend is one of the most dangerous and deadliest times of the year to travel. Play it safe this holiday season and buckle up -- it’s not only the law; it could help save your life.

Allow extra time
The heaviest holiday travel traffic occurs during the days immediately before and after Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year’s Day. With that in mind, consider leaving the Tuesday before Thanksgiving instead of the Wednesday before, or traveling home the Monday after Thanksgiving as opposed to the Sunday after.

Watch your speed
Speeding is never a good idea, especially during the holidays. So take your time, obey the speed limits and you should get to your family’s house in plenty of time to enjoy the holiday festivities.

Do not drink and drive
According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, more people are killed in drinking and driving accidents during Thanksgiving weekend than during New Year’s Day weekend. If you or a loved one has had too much to drink, call a cab or stay at a friend or relative’s house -- it will be one of the best decisions you have ever made.

References: Auto insurance article at money.aol.com/
“Safety Highlights”

by Donovan Agans (Director BCEM)

The term, Shelter-In-Place, means to seek immediate shelter and remain there during an emergency rather than evacuate the area. Certain events may necessitate the initiation of the University’s Shelter-In-Place procedures. It is designated for those situations in which it is safer for individuals to remain indoors than to evacuate.

Once the decision has been made to Shelter-In-Place the notification will be made using all means of communication available. Depending on the circumstances UTSA could utilize Reverse 911, Giant Voice, mass email, closed circuit television or local media.

When an emergency notification is made to Shelter-In-Place please do the following:

- Move to rooms or hallways with no windows that can open or are open
- Close any open windows and doors if you cannot move
- Notify those around you, and encourage others to remain in your room/office rather than leave the building
- Stay away from windows
- Check email or visit the university website, or a television if available, to receive more information concerning the emergency
- Stay in place until you are directed that it is safe to evacuate and are directed by an easily recognizable authority

In the event that a call to Shelter-In-Place must be declared it is usually for a short duration of time, a few hours at most. When a crisis situation strikes and Shelter-In-Place is declared please act quickly and calmly to safeguard yourself and others.

The University of Texas at San Antonio Police Department is providing an instructional video to assist with actions that should be taken during a critical incident such as one involving “shots fired” on our campuses. This 20 minute training video demonstrates how to respond to an active shooter situation and provides critical guidance on what to do to protect yourself. Go to www.utsa.edu/utsapd/Shots_fired/Shots_Fired.html.

The UTSA Police Department will be celebrating the promotion of the following individuals:

Sgt. Darwin Odom & Sgt. Geoffrey Merritt
Cpl. Eric Weber
Senior Administrative Associate I Robin Diamond

The promotion ceremony is on Monday December 7, 2009 at 2:00 pm at the University Center Retama Room

“Detective Time” by Sgt. Thomas Calucci (Supervisor, Criminal Investigations)

As I was watching football on Sunday, I saw a quick news story about four police officers who were killed while sitting in a coffee shop in Washington State. I flipped to a news station and saw video of hundreds of officers at the scene. I saw mostly patrol officers combing the nearby area searching for the suspect, but I also saw about two dozen detectives at the crime scene.

As I watched the news, not only was my heart breaking for the families of those officers but I was also thinking about how dynamic of a crime scene that the detectives had to process. As I have told you before, the number one goal of processing a crime scene is to gather evidence to place the bad guy at the scene. What is evidence you ask. There are two real types of evidence. One is physical evidence which is evidence that may contain DNA, fingerprints, hairs or fibers. The other type of evidence is testimonial evidence. This is evidence taken from victims or witnesses. Some cases are prosecuted on only testimonial evidence.

I heard from the newscast that there were several customers and employees of the shop inside the store when the shooting happened. Good police work dictates that these witnesses be kept separate so as not to talk to any of the other witnesses. Talking with a victim or witness and then obtaining a proper written statement takes time to accomplish. If there are multiple witnesses, this may use a lot of manpower, but it is necessary to get down on paper what occurred.

Working a crime scene is something you never get used to, especially a heartbreaking one such as what occurred in Washington state. They are never as “pretty” as the ones you see on television. But by following established protocols and gathering sufficient evidence, there is a good chance of catching the bad guy.

UTSA Office of Business Affairs: Your Partner for Successful Solutions!
**Lost and Found**

All found property that is turned in to the University Police Lost & Found section is stored at the University Police Lost & Found for 60 days. After 60 days, the found property is transferred to the Surplus Property Department for public auctions or further disposition.

To report lost property items or to make inquiries regarding lost property call 210.458.4242 (24 hours a day). To claim found property items, individuals must present a valid Texas Driver’s license, UTSA photo ID card or a valid photo ID card from another source; military ID or another state photo ID card. Individuals must be able to accurately describe the property that was lost in order to claim property from the lost & found section.

The below listed items are currently being held by UTSA PD. If not claimed in 30 days, they will be disposed of in accordance with policy.

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**Dealing With Finals: How to Survive!**

Most students experience some form of stress during college finals. While a little stress is OK because it motivates people to take action, too much stress can be harmful to a student’s health. The following tips offer ways college students can cope with stress during finals:

- **Get enough sleep**
- Pulling all-nighters with ten cups of coffee is not going to get you very far on test day. No one’s brain works well on limited sleep.
- **Remember to eat**
- It’s particularly important to remember to eat breakfast before morning finals.
- **Be prepared**
- It is vital that you study the right things. Take another look at the syllabus, and any assignments your professor has given you.
- **Pay attention to details**
- Make sure you know the time your final will be given and if the professor will be requiring a bluebook, scantron, etc.
- **Don’t worry**
- Stress is normal. It’s what motivates people to do better and to actually study for that final.
- **Exercise to Reduce Stress**
- Physical activity decreases the production of stress hormones in the body. Students who engage in some type of physical activity during finals will have a much easier time coping with their stress.
- **Create a Schedule for Studying**
- A finals schedule lets students map out time for studying for final exams and the work will seem much more feasible to accomplish.
- **Organize Study Groups**
- Some students experience stress during finals because they don’t understand material that will appear on their final exam. Students can organize study groups with their classmates.
- But at the end of the day, when you’ve done all you could do, turn off that brain, crash for a good eight hours, and walk into that final rested and fed. You know you’ve given your all to prepare. Any further worrying will just increase your chances of freezing up.

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**Acting Chief Pena says:**

**Good job by Officer Michael Crist for chasing and apprehending a suspect in a purse snatcher near the Downtown Campus. The suspect was held until SAPD arrived.**

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**Chief’s Corner By Acting Chief Dan Pena**

The end of the Fall Semester is a busy time for everyone. For some students, it’s the end of a long road which ends with graduation ceremonies in the Convocation Center and then off to new careers and challenges. For others, it’s time to go home and spend the holidays with family and friends. Unfortunately, it’s also a time of year when vehicle and residential burglaries tend to increase. The cover story of this month’s Runner Beat titled: “Tips for a Happy and Safe Holiday Season” applies to us all and I would like to add a couple more tips for all UTSA campus residents to consider.

Lock your doors and windows. Many residents have purposely left windows unlocked so their friends can gain access to their apartments when they are gone. This practice has resulted in numerous thefts of electronic equipment such as flat screen televisions and game systems.

Lock your interior bedroom door. You may trust your roommates, but they may invite some friends over who may not be so law abiding. By removing the opportunity and the temptation by locking your door you can prevent the possible theft of your personal property.

On move out day be especially security conscious when you transport your belongings from your apartment to your vehicle. It’s not uncommon to see personal property stacked outside apartments or at the bottom of the stairs. Keep all property secure in your apartment until you can make the next trip to your vehicle. Do not carry more than you can handle at one time.

And finally, do not leave your vehicle open/unlocked while you make trips back and forth from your apartment. It’s obvious to a thief that you are making trips back and forth to your apartment. That game system you just left in the back of your truck may be too tempting to pass up once you leave to get your next load. It possible, have a friend stay with your vehicle while you return to your apartment.

The last memory you should have while you return to your apartment is the thought of the possibility of theft. So, lock your doors and windows, and provide a deterrence against theft.

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**Have a Happy and Safe Holiday Season and Best Wishes for a Joyful New Year!**

From the UTSA Police Department

Want to share you blessings this Holiday Season? There are several ways you can.

- UTSA PD has several Food Drive boxes located throughout campus. Please donate any non-perishable food item in the box.
- The San Antonio Police Department has the Blue Santa program that assists needy families during Christmas. To donate, contact SAPD’s Blue Santa program at 207-7175.

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Don’t stress out during your final exam. (Photo from Google Images)