

The National Crime Prevention Council says travel safety has taken on a new meaning during these tough economic times. The organization best known for its icon, McGruff the Crime Dog, says opportunistic thieves may be looking for unprotected homes or pre-occupied travelers during the Thanksgiving holiday. NCPC suggests following these safety tips to avoid problems during the start of the busiest travel season of the year.

### **Safety begins at home**

- Make sure your house looks "lived-in" when you are away. Lock all doors and windows, and set household lights (inside and out) on timers.
- Trim your hedges and bushes so thieves do not have a place to hide out.
- Have a neighbor park a car in your driveway to make it appear as if someone is home.
- Invest in an alarm. An alarm system controls access points to your home and lets you know if someone has invaded your space.
- Ask a trusted neighbor or friend to watch your house and pick up your mail and newspapers while you are away.
- File a "travel plan." Let someone know where you are going, the route you plan to take, and when you plan to arrive. If you deviate from that plan, let someone know.

### **Watch out for clever criminals**

- Do not stop if your car is bumped from behind or if someone says there is something wrong with your car. Go to a service station or a well-lit, populated area and call for help.
- Fill the gas tank before dark and lock your car doors, and roll up your windows if you step away from the car for any reason.
- Never leave items of value such as cell phones, cameras, jewelry, or other expensive belongings visible in your car. Lock them in your trunk or take them with you.

**Safety away from home**

- Carry money separately from credit cards. Carry your purse close to your body or your wallet inside a coat or front trouser pocket.
- If you choose to shop on Black Friday, do not overburden yourself with packages to avoid being an easy target.
- Stick to well-lighted and well-traveled streets at all times.
- Select ATM machines in visible, well-lighted locations.
- Do not leave valuables in your hotel room. Most hotels have safes for guest use.
- Keep your hotel room door locked, even when you are inside.