

SAFETY

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SAFETY Around the Holidays

Welcome to December. This is a month of holidays, parties, festivities of all sorts and cold, at times snowy, weather. With this in mind, the December E-tips will focus in on a very broad topic - SAFETY - with particular attention to concerns most prominent around this time of year. To be sure, safety is a subject that can be addressed in an infinite number of arenas. This month's articles can't possibly provide a comprehensive review. Future E-tips articles will address additional components of this important topic. For December, we will provide suggestions to enhance individual safety while you shop, in your home, with your vehicle, and related to your overall health and well-being. Some of the ideas to be mentioned seem like common sense, some are less apparent. Either way, we all can get preoccupied and fail to attend to personal safety with vigilance, perhaps until a major safety problem occurs. There are many preventive things we can all do to enhance our safety and perhaps avoid becoming a victim.



We begin this series with ideas about security while shopping. Many of us spend a lot of time in December shopping. If possible, shop with others and go to stores in which there are a number of other customers. If you need cash and stop to get it at an ATM, make sure there is plenty of light and no one seems to be loitering in the vicinity. Withdraw the cash and quickly put it in a wallet or purse. Don't spend time counting and standing with it in sight. If possible, don't carry large sums of cash. Consider credit cards or travelers checks which can be replaced if lost or stolen. Carry your purse or wallet close to your body. If a robber approaches you demanding you hand over your purse or wallet, don't simply hand it over. Throw it away from you. If s/he goes to retrieve it, run in the opposite direction.

When you have packages to put into your vehicle, lock them in the trunk. Avoid repeatedly adding items to the trunk and leaving your vehicle to return to shopping. Thieves may be observing and preparing to break in once you are out of sight. Generally, be alert. Know what you brought with you, what you buy and where you put it. Use caution and then enjoy your shopping experience.

AUTOMOBILE TRAVEL SAFETY

December is a month when folks are often "on the go" In New England that typically involves travel by car. This week we look at how to be safe in your vehicle. First, try to be sure your vehicle is in good repair with at least ½ tank of fuel. This minimizes breakdowns, freezing gas lines, and frantic attempt to get to a gas station that may be far away, closed or simply out of the way. It's a good idea to keep an emergency kit in the car at all times. Such a kit might include a thermal blanket, flares, flashlight, a "HELP" sign, jumper cables, water and basic first aid supplies. A (charged) cell phone is also very handy to have available for contacting emergency services or friends/relatives who could be helpful or may need to know about changes in plans or timing. Don't use cell phones in ways that distract you from attention to driving. Blue tooth accessories are more affordable and can provide a convenient way to converse while driving, however, maintaining



attention to the road is still the priority. Weather conditions can make travel a particular challenge at this time of year. In addition, one must be vigilant for drivers who may have been drinking at social gatherings or may be especially fatigued but still on the road. As always, using your seatbelt is critical!

Leon James, Ph.D. an expert on “driver psychology” from The University of Hawaii suggests that you think about how people are outside their cars this time of year to understand what’s going on for drivers. Many are preoccupied, overwhelmed, rushed and at times agitated. This doesn’t make for the best drivers. Be aware and give others space. Don’t express your frustrations through your driving.

When you arrive at your destination, try to park in a well lit area. Lock your vehicle. If you park in a parking garage, use elevators, not stairwells. When returning to your car, have keys out and ready. Look around and be aware of the surroundings. If something is suspicious, avoid approaching and take an alternate route. If you have a cell phone, keep it accessible. When you get into your vehicle, lock it, put on your seatbelt, and go. Don’t linger in the parking space. If you park in a driveway outside a garage at home, remove garage door openers from your vehicle. A thief can break into the car fairly easily and then have access through your garage to your home.

Safety At Home

“Home sweet home.” Home is a place where most people invest in all kinds of ways. Investment of money, time and emotion all get connected with home. This week’s e-tip addresses some ways to protect this most valuable investment.

Police records indicate that residential burglary is one of the most frequently reported crimes. In December, many folks come and go to and from home many times and at unusual hours. To safeguard your home consider the following suggestions.



- Make sure all exterior doors have good locks
- Secure sliding glass doors with bars and locks
- Illuminate all entrances
- Keep bushes trimmed and snow drifts cleared where they obstruct views of entrances
- Don’t hide keys under mats or flowerpots
- Turn on your alarm system if one is installed

Other threats to home security can also be prevented or minimized. Take time to put precautions in place.

- Make sure smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors are in working condition
- Keep a fire extinguisher in your home
- Stay especially attentive when using a fireplace, candles or space heaters
- Keep a list of emergency phone numbers in a prominent place at home
- Make sure the address numerals for your home are clearly visible to emergency personnel
- If away on vacation, have mail and newspapers held or collected by a neighbor
- Don’t open the door for strangers!

With these precautions in place, home can be a more secure place to enjoy throughout this season and all year ‘round.

SAFETY:HEALTH

This Final installment of TIPS for December 2007 will address certain aspects of “health safety”. The Partnership for Clear Health Communication, a coalition of national organizations working to promote informed healthcare consumers, has put together a program called **Ask Me 3**. The program encourages consumers to ask 3 key questions of their healthcare providers.

Question #1

What is my main problem?

Question #2

What do I need to do?

Question #3

Why is it important for me to do this?

These basic questions are designed to help consumers be clear about how to best take care of their health. Many folks find medical and behavioral healthcare confusing and even intimidating at times. They may hesitate to seek help at all or to ask questions if they do ultimately interact with healthcare professionals. Medical settings are often busy and consumers can feel rushed when interacting with providers. Some find it beneficial to organize a list of questions before a medical visit and perhaps write them down to bring to the appointment. Some also find it valuable to take notes during the visit so they have a record of answers / instructions / suggestions to look over at home. EAP counselors can be a resource in the initial stages of seeking medical or behavioral healthcare. They can assist with finding a professional who is well suited to work with you on your particular concern and can help to prepare you for that care. Remember, your EAP visits are free and confidential.



Call Solutions EAP at 1-800-526-3485 for assistance for all of life's challenges.

It's free, confidential and open to your family members.

Check us out on-line at www.solutions-eap.com