

November 2019

## **Shopping season is here – stay safe, urges Fidelity ADT**

Black Friday is scheduled for 29 November this year and will no doubt have shoppers flocking to take advantage of bargain prices. There will also be a flux of shoppers bustling to get their festive season shopping done over the next few weeks. “We are urging all shoppers to be vigilant at malls and shopping centres and to be aware that we generally see a spike in follow-home incidents at this time of year,” says Charnel Hattingh, National Marketing and Communications Manager Fidelity ADT.

She says in most cases shoppers are followed home from the malls and hijacked in their driveways. “Criminals are aware these shoppers have a car full of newly-purchased items and are generally easy, distracted targets.” She advises shoppers to keep an eye out for any suspicious vehicles when exiting the shopping centre. “If you suspect you are being followed drive immediately to your nearest police station or security provider guard house,” she adds.

Hattingh also reminds drivers to remember the general hijacking safety tips such as waiting in the road for the gate to open before driving in, and making sure the gate is closed properly behind the vehicle before getting out.

“When in the mall or centre carry as little as possible in your handbag or pockets and rather leave unnecessary bank or store cards and large amounts of cash at home. A packed clothing store or supermarket is the prime hunting-ground for a pick-pocket or bag-snatcher. And, never leave a handbag, purse or wallet in a trolley. If you don’t use a bag or do not take one along, keep your wallet or purse in the front pocket of your jacket or trousers. Criminals are also targeting phones so make sure your phone is out of sight either in a zipped-up bag or in a front pocket.”

“If you are drawing large amounts of cash, take someone along to keep watch while you are at the ATM and to keep a look out for any suspicious individuals or vehicles on the way home. If you can avoid drawing large sums of cash, do so. Electronic payments are the safer route,” says Hattingh.

Your safety outside the mall is just as important as it is inside, she adds. “Before you exit the mall, have your keys ready so that no time is wasted to get your purchases and yourself into the car. This also means that you’ll be able to hold onto your handbag as you walk. If someone does try to snatch your handbag, let it go. Do not resist or fight back,” she advises.

Lastly Hattingh suggests avoiding shopping late at night. “While the idea of a quieter shopping mall may seem appealing, you are more vulnerable in the car parks, mall bathrooms and the likes. If you have no other choice, be vigilant and report any suspicious individuals to the mall security. Let’s make our shopping experiences happy and crime-free,” she concludes.

**/ends**