



8 Tips for Keeping Your Home Safe for the Holidays

1. Be proactive against package theft.

From Cyber Monday deals to the allure of free shipping, there's a lot of reasons to do your holiday shopping online. Use home security devices like smart lights, video doorbells, and alarm systems to help deter package thieves. Better yet, take steps to make sure your packages aren't sitting out in the open for too long – send them to your work, or invest in a package lock-box.

2. Deck the halls – safely.

However, you choose to flex your design skills, just be sure that your decorations don't pose any safety risks. Lighting and other electronics are common culprits – check cords to make sure they're still in good condition, and don't overload outlets. Turn lights off when you go to bed, set them on a timer, or use a smart plug. Don't use candles, open flames or other heat sources near the Christmas tree. If you have a real tree, keep it well-watered and firmly supported in its stand. And if you're an Elf on the Shelf family, heed warnings from fire departments across the nation: Don't leave the little guy near any heat sources, including lamps. There's nothing sadder (or possibly more dangerous) than a melted elf.

3. Don't overshare on social media.

You never really know who looks at your social media posts, and who they share it with. It's tempting to brag about a great gift or talk about travel plans, but these kinds of posts can set you up as a target. People with bad intentions can use them to plan their next burglary.

4. Tic the season...for increased fire risk.

Fire risk is higher in the cold weather months. People spend more time indoors, home cooks are busy in the kitchen, and heating appliances are operating at full tilt. Plus, the holidays present a flurry of distractions. Double check your smoke alarms and fire extinguishers and keep your heating system well-maintained. Santa isn't the only one who likes a clean chimney! Find more expert fire prevention tips [here](#).

5. Practice safe gifting.

Buy kids age-appropriate gifts. This is especially important for very young children. The age rating on packaged toys is based on safety, not intelligence or preferences. Sticking with the recommended age guidelines helps avoid choking hazards and other risks.

If you gift a toy like a bike that requires safety equipment, it's best to include the safety equipment too (or enlist a Santa's helper who could use a last-minute gift idea). Most kids will want to try out their new bikes or scooters right away, so make sure they have what they need to stay safe.

Be mindful of recalls from the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). Every few years a hot-ticket Christmas item turns out to be a safety risk. Remember when everyone wanted a hoverboard? Hundreds of thousands were recalled between 2016-2017. Or think further back to 1997, when Mattel recalled 500,000 Snacktime Cabbage Patch dolls because their mechanical jaws gobbled up kids' hair and fingers.

6. Protect your empty home.

People frequently go on vacation or visit relatives during the holidays, and thieves know it. Whether you're going to be across town or across the globe, try to make it appear as if your house is occupied. Consider smart lighting, leaving a car in the driveway, and making sure someone will bring in the mail and clear snow for you. A security camera or a monitored home security system is the surest way to keep your home safe, and bonus, there are some great home security holiday deals around this time of year.

7. Did You Receive a High-End Gift? Keep it under wraps.

Wrapped packages on full display under the tree might be all-too-alluring to an opportunistic thief. Similarly, empty boxes for big-ticket items left out on the curb are tip-offs that breaking into your home could be well worth it. Don't flaunt gifts where they can easily be seen from outside and break down boxes before you throw them away.⁸

8. Extend some seasonal cheer to your neighbors.

Neighbors who know one another look out for each other, and this makes the whole community safer and stronger. If you haven't had the opportunity to meet your immediate neighbors, the holidays are a perfect excuse to do so. Using proper "Social Distance" Recommendations feel free to Introduce yourself!