

For Immediate Release

PROTECT YOURSELF FROM “THE GRINCH”, PANDEMIC PORCH PIRATES AND UNSAVOURY ONLINE CROOKS THIS HOLIDAY

Vancouver, B.C. (December 15, 2020): Everyone’s heard about people who lose their online purchases to thieves scouring front porches for valuables – perhaps right in your own neighbourhood. Its hard to resist when all that merchandise is brand new, nicely packaged, easy to carry - and best of all - already paid for. Easy pickings if left unattended for long, but a lot of people still seem happy taking the risk anyway.

Protecting those packages is more important than ever with 2020 being the year in which online Christmas shopping has soared due to the pandemic. So as holiday deliveries start to peak, it’s time for our holiday season update from Metro Vancouver Crime Stoppers on how to avoid becoming the next porch pirate victim (*see tips below*).



“Ironically, so many more people were actually working from home in 2020, so their houses weren’t left unattended as much. Yet, porches went unwatched anyway as people spent hours in the den on video calls, in the kitchen or streaming TV shows,” says Linda Annis, Executive Director of Metro Vancouver Crime Stoppers. “If they just spent two minutes to think about how they might monitor the front door better, there would be fewer thefts.”

Crime Stoppers reminds us that anyone seeing a crime in progress should call 9-1-1 or the local police. However, if you have information that could help solve or prevent a crime, and want to remain anonymous, call us at Crime Stoppers by phone, online, or through our “P3” smartphone app. The information you provide is passed directly to police and your anonymity is guaranteed by the Supreme Court of Canada.

TIPS - ONLINE SHOPPING AND HOME SECURITY TIPS FOR CHRISTMAS BARGAIN HUNTERS

1. **Everybody’s ordering online like there’s no tomorrow - so don’t let all those deliveries sit on your porch for long.** So many packages on so many porches make for easy pickings. If you’re not home for the delivery, or can’t watch for it while busy at home, ask neighbours to help watch for anything left on your porch. You can return the favour for them too.
2. **Don’t get taken in when shopping online.** Buy from proper, established businesses instead of relatively unknown sources, and be wary of online deals that don’t feel right. Shoplifted goods often get sold to the public online or through flea markets, with the money going to fund gangs dealing in drugs or illegal weapons. It’s bigger than you think - organized retail crime costs all Canadians almost \$5 billion a year.

(more)

3. **Use home video security cameras to watch for deliveries and crooks.** Feed the images to your smartphone, and you might even spot a crook stealing from your Christmas lawn display.
4. **Watch for counterfeit items.** Lots of fake goods enter Canada through our ports of entry from Pacific Rim and other countries, so it's easy to smuggle in goods that are poor quality, or even unsafe.
5. **Ask yourself, "why is this so cheap"?** Be wary of counterfeit or poor quality "bargains" from market stalls or a "pop-up" retailer that's in business one minute, and can be gone the next.
6. **Close the blinds.** Make sure gifts inside the house aren't visible outside. Peering through the window and seeing piles of gifts sitting beneath a Christmas tree is irresistible to burglars.
7. **Don't leave stacks of cardboard lying outside your house.** Boxes from expensive gifts left outside your house are a billboard announcing what's new inside – great for a burglar treasure hunt.
8. **Etch it - mark your property.** Ask your local police to help etch your property with your driver's license number. Photograph valuables and show the make, model and serial number. If something's stolen and later found by police, there's a better chance that you'll get it back.

TIPS - DOWNTOWN AND AT THE MALL

9. **Don't make your car a "crook's candy store".** Before you lock up, leave nothing visible inside your car. Not even pocket change or empty bottles and cans.
10. **Don't "park in the dark".** Find a busy, well-lit section of the parking lot.
11. **Lock your gifts in the trunk.** We say this every year – yet people still leave presents in plain view in the back seat.
12. **Guard your garage door opener.** Leave the remote at home when shopping, or tuck it in your pocket so a smart car thief can't just let himself in if he figures out your address

About Metro Vancouver Crime Stoppers

Metro Vancouver Crime Stoppers is a non-profit society and registered charity that offers rewards for anonymous tip information about criminal activity and provides it to investigators in the communities of Metro Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Anonymous tips may be provided through Crime Stoppers' downloadable "**P3**" app for Apple and Android phones, calling Crime Stoppers at **1-855-448-8477 (new number)** or **1-800-222- 8477**, online at solvecrime.ca, or by following the link on the Metro Vancouver Crime Stoppers [Facebook page](#). Metro Vancouver Crime Stoppers accepts tips in 115 different languages and will pay a reward of up to \$5,000 for information leading to the arrest of a criminal, recovery of stolen property, seizure of illegal drugs or guns or denial of a fraudulent insurance claim. Tipsters stay anonymous by using code numbers to check back later and collect their rewards.

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