

How to Enjoy a Safe and Happy Holiday Season

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driver or avoid drinking.

Extra patrols will be out on the streets looking for drivers who are driving impaired. Additionally, D.U.I. checkpoints will be set up around the City. Their locations will be announced in local newspapers.

Anyone arrested will be booked into jail, an expensive and embarrassing circumstance that can be avoided with a little pre-planning. Take a cab home or get someone sober to take you home or make sleeping arrangements if necessary to avoid driving, Officer George Aguirre advises.

Because the holiday season can be lucrative for thieves, police advise being

alert and security-conscious.

Some recommendations for avoiding becoming a victim include:

- Lock your cars, even while parked in the driveway at home. Unlocked doors are an invitation to theft.
- Put your parcels in your trunk and out of view.
- When you get home, put your packages away in a place that is out of plain view to anyone passing outside.
- If your Christmas tree is near a window where piles of gifts can be seen from the street, you might consider waiting until Christmas Eve to put the gifts out.

Remember to keep your garage door closed and side doors locked even during the day if you're not around. An open

garage door is an invitation to thieves who can quickly empty a car of its valuables and steal other property kept in the garage such as lawnmowers, bicycles, golf clubs and other items.

While shopping, try to park as close to the store entrances as possible and in well-lighted areas. Whenever possible, avoid walking alone and avoid carrying so many packages because this can make you vulnerable to a hit-and-run thief. If you feel uncomfortable for any reason, ask a store security officer or employee to escort you to your car.

Also, remember not to hang purses or bags on the door hooks in store restrooms. You can easily forget these items or thieves can easily reach over or under and steal them.

Merchants can also keep their employees from being victims by following some simple steps as well:

- Make sure your employees have a well-lighted parking area for their cars.
- Whenever possible see that the last employee does not leave alone.
- Provide your workers with a secure place away from their workstations to store their purses and other personal belongings. A locked cabinet or storage area is most preferable.
- Thieves will often work in pairs, one creating a distraction to let the other steal the employees' purse or wallet.
- Make an extra last check before closing to make sure that workers have brought in and secured all the merchandise.

At home, watch your neighbors' home while they are away and ask them to do the same for you. Report any suspicious activity or people to the police department immediately.

Finally, consider forming a Neighborhood Watch with your neighbors. The program is a proven deterrent to residential thefts. Residents interested in forming a Neighborhood Watch program can call Community Service Officer Charlene Jacques at (925) 809-7779.

City's Police Department Still Recruiting Officers to Match Growth in Population

The City's Police Department is continuing its recruitment of new officers to keep up with Brentwood's growing population.

Ideally the department would like to have about 1.5 officers per 1,000 citizens, according to Lt. Tom Hansen. The force, which has 50 sworn officers, needs about 12 more officers to meet that ratio now.

In recent months Hansen has gone on recruiting trips to the Napa Police Academy and the Contra Costa County Law Enforcement Training Center.

The department is always open to applications from candidates who live within Brentwood.

Candidates must have completed the police academy or be working as police officers in another jurisdiction. They must be over 21, pass a physical (medical exam) and psychological exam, submit to a polygraph or lie detector exam and undergo a background check. They also must pass written and oral tests before they will be considered for hiring.

"About 80 percent of the police force live in Brentwood," Hansen says.

In addition to a patrol officer's salary that starts at \$5,299 per month (laterals may start at a higher pay step), the department offers a \$10,000 signing bonus and a \$28,999 home down payment to successful candidates. The signing bonus is paid out over five years. The first installment, \$2,000, is paid upon hiring. Another \$3,000 is paid after completing probation and the final \$5,000 at the end of five years.

The home-buying incentive is a 20-year loan. It is forgiven if the officer buys a home in Brentwood and remains with the department for that period. Otherwise it is forgiven at the rate of 5 percent annually.

Applications are available at City Hall, 708 Third St., or on the City's website at www.ci.brentwood.ca.us. Click on "employment/job openings" under "Resources On Line."

Because the City is growing, recruits have a chance to experience different assignments and move up in the ranks, Hansen says. Brentwood is projected to reach a population of 75,000. At that point the department would need at least 110 officers to serve the City.