



# PARTNERS IN CRIME PREVENTION

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## VACATION SAFETY— PROTECTING YOURSELF ON YOUR TRIP

With the summer vacation season upon us we will be taking trips be they short journeys within the state or bigger trips to a foreign country.

As we put COVID behind us, the motivation to get away to see other parts of the country or the world only increases. According to press reports, there has been a rush of travelers going to places that they have not been able to go to for the last two years.

While we think about the fun, the relaxation, seeing new places and meeting new people on vacation, we do risk having our money, cell phone, credit cards, or identity stolen.

More and more the risk is becoming both a physical one through theft and a cyber one through online scams and identity theft on our smartphones and laptops/tablets.

Before the computer revolution of the last 20 to 30 years, our security concerns have focused on physical security such as locking car doors; keeping documents such as passports, cash, credit cards, travelers checks (remember travelers checks?) out of sight and secure from thieves and pick pockets.

With the advent of smart phones, now we can pay with the tap of our smart

phones on a terminal. We also have our flight boarding pass on our phones to show before we board an airplane. And through our smartphones, and/or a tablet computer that we might take with us, we carry a lot of personal information, bankcard account information, home address, etc., that a thief can use to buy things on our dime, or to impersonate us for their advantage.

A basic tenant for preventing crime is to do things that takes away opportunity for a thief to take your possessions. There remains a physical aspect to taking away opportunity; like using a money belt to carry cash, extra credit cards, or your passport when you do not need it. Also, you can use your hotel safe to store those same items.

But, taking away opportunity for a thief to gain access to your electronic devices and the information in them are also just as important. Keep those devices in your hotel safe when you are not using them. Limit access to them with a strong password, or biometrics. Lock down your accounts with strong passwords and multifactor authentication.

If you have practices in place to take opportunity away from a thief, you should have a pleasant and fun vacation.



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## VACATION SAFETY- PICKPOCKETS

*We often see warnings about pickpockets especially at destinations such as Paris, Rome or London. But you can assume that pickpockets are anywhere crowds of tourists congregate. Tourists make good targets because they have the money, are in unfamiliar locations and can be easily distracted and are in the city or area for a short time.*

*Pickpockets often work in groups, with one or more people causing a distraction and someone doing the pickpocketing while you are distracted.*

- *Be aware of your surroundings. Stay away from big crowds and disturbances.*
- *Keep as little on your person as possible (one credit card, one piece of ID, a little bit of cash).*
- *Ladies- carry a purse with a zipper and carry it tightly under your arm and slightly in front of you.*
- *Gentlemen- Wrap your wallet with a rubber band and carry it in a front pocket.*

## VACATION SAFETY- PHYSICAL SAFETY

Physical security remains important while you are on vacation.

### **Protecting your home while you're gone.**

While you are away, burglars can take the opportunity to steal from you home. You can take some simple measures to protect your home from a burglary-

- Let a trusted neighbor know that your will be gone. Ask them to keep an eye out on your home.
- Have your mail and newspaper held or have a trusted neighbor pick them up so that burglars do not know that you are gone.
- Park a car in your driveway to make it appear as if someone is home.
- Use timers on some of your lights throughout your house. This also helps to make your house look lived in.
- Lock your doors and close and lock your windows when you leave.

**Physical security while you are on your trip.** While you are on your trip there are practical measures that you can take to remove opportunity from a thief.

If you are driving,

- Always lock your car doors. Keep valuables out of sight, preferably in the trunk of your car.
- Never pick up hitchhikers.

- Park in well-lighted areas and close to buildings.
- Do not stop alongside the road if possible. If your car is bumped from behind or if someone indicates there is something wrong with your car, go to a service station or a well-lighted, populated area and call for help.
- Fill the gas tank before dark; lock your car doors and roll up your windows if you step away from the car for any reason.

At your hotel,

- Use all hotel locks and other security devices, even when you're in your room.
- Store valuables in the room safe or in the facility's main safe.
- Don't tell strangers the name of your hotel, your room number, or other personal information.
- Guard your room keys. Don't leave them unattended or visible at restaurants, the pool, or clubs.
- Don't prop open your door or open your door to strangers. Use the peep hole before opening the door.
- Don't leave your purse or bags unattended at hotel buffets or lounges.

## VACATION SAFETY– CYBER SAFETY

When we travel in the 21st century we take our electronic gadgets. We take our smartphones to look up the local weather forecast, airline schedules, etc. We also may take a tablet computer or laptop to keep up with our email, the news from home, to play games, or watch movies.

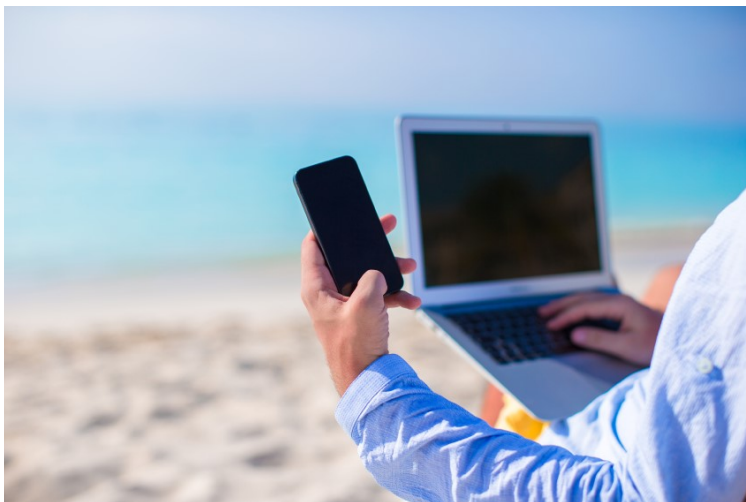
Taking our devices while they give us opportunities to look up information and to entertain ourselves also increase the risk that someone can steal our personal information for identity theft or scam us while we are on the go.

Taking some precautions can help you prevent someone stealing your identity while you are on vacation,

- Limit the number the devices that you take with you.
- Be sure the software on your devices are up to date.
- Backup files that are on your devices.
- Think before you post on social media. You can share a special picture when you get back home.
- Disable auto connecting to Wi-Fi and Blue-

tooth.

- Lock down your accounts with strong, unique passwords, two factor authentication, biometrics, etc.
- Make sure all devices that you take with you are password protected and/or use biometrics to gain access.
- Set up “find my phone” features to find a lost device, to have the capability to wipe the data off of the device or disable it should it get into the wrong hands.
- If you use someone else’s computer, like at an airport, hotel, or internet café, don’t share information. Keep your online activity as generic as possible. If you do log into one of your accounts, like email, be sure to “logout;” clicking the “x” in the upper right corner of a window does not log you out of your accounts.



## VACATION SAFETY– MORE TIPS

- *Be savvy about Wi-Fi hotspots. Do not transmit personal information or make purchases over an unsecured network such as over an airport Wi-Fi. Use a VPN or your phone as a hotspot.*
- *Protect your devices. Be sure they are with you at all times. At a hotel, lock them in the room safe or in your locked luggage. When using your device in an internet café or the airport don't leave it unattended.*
- *Manage location services on your apps. They can expose your location to others. Turn them off when not in use.*

## VACATION SAFETY- BOOKING YOUR TRIP

Unfortunately, scammers have found ways to take your money and your personal information by posing as legitimate travel agencies, hotels, or vacation rental agencies. Or they might hijack a legitimate web site with their own contact information.

They might

- Pressure you to make a fast decision
- Offer prices at significantly lower rates than normal
- Ask for payment with a wire transfer or a prepaid gift card
- Offer steep discounts on cruises or vacation packages with few details about the “five-star” or “luxury” facilities
- Offer a free trip, but to claim it, you need to give them your credit card information, pay an advance fee, or attend a presentation

AARP recommends that you take the following actions to protect yourself from a vacation scam:

- Research prospective vacation rentals. Search the address online to confirm it exists, and use a tool like

Google Street View to make sure it matches photos in the listing.

Search for the property and owner with terms like “scam,” “complaint” and “review.”

- Call the owner and ask detailed questions about the property and the area. If the person insists on sticking to email or gives vague answers, take a pass.
- When renting a condo, get a written rental agreement. Any reputable property owner, agent or manager will provide one, with terms and protections for both parties.
- Do read the fine print, especially regarding cancellation and refund policies and payment security. Check that a rental company offers built-in protection against scams.
- Get the terms of a travel deal in writing. Check for hidden costs such as processing fees, peak travel charges and unauthorized travel insurance.
- Pay by credit card. That gives you the most protection if a deal turns out to be fraudulent or deceptive.

## SHERIFF'S OFFICE RESOURCES

### CRIME STATISTICS & REPORTS

For information about crime statistics for the Snohomish County Sheriff's Office and its contract cities go to the following link:

<https://www.snohomishcountywa.gov/3308/Crime-Statistics-Reports>

### SHERIFF'S OFFICE CRIME PREVENTION WEB PAGE:

<http://www.snohomishcountywa.gov/289/Crime-Prevention>

## NEWSLETTER INFO

### EDITOR

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If you have questions regarding this newsletter or any articles that appear in it, please contact the editor at [neighborhoodwatch@snoco.org](mailto:neighborhoodwatch@snoco.org)

## TIP LINES



Snohomish County Sheriff's Office: 425-388-3845

<http://snohomishcountywa.gov/303/Anonymous-Tips>

Crime Stoppers of Puget Sound: 1-800-222-8477