



For Immediate Release  
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## Home Security Especially Critical During Holiday Periods

HARRISONBURG—The Harrisonburg Police Department is making a special plea to holiday travelers, especially college students leaving the area for the Christmas/New Year break, to assure their residences are secure and valuables hidden before they leave the city.

“Unfortunately, the city experiences an increase in burglaries around the holidays, so citizens should be doubly aware of the potential for becoming a victim,” says Officer Chris Monahan, the HPD’s Community Resource Officer.

Burglaries in college housing areas during the Thanksgiving break spiked this year, with 16 reported, and four more occurred in other areas of the city.

“More often than not, burglary is a crime of opportunity. Windows and doors that are not locked and valuable possessions such as jewelry, computers and game boxes plainly visible through windows are invitations to criminals to help themselves,” Monahan says.

Over the Christmas break, the Harrisonburg Police Department will ramp up its crime prevention activities in high-risk areas, employing intelligence gained from crime analysis, the experience of patrol officers, increased patrols by Special Operations teams and covert monitoring.

“Burglaries tend to be difficult crimes to close by arrest because there seldom are witnesses and few clues to work with,” explains Monahan. “Deterrence is the best defense,” Monahan says.



With the Christmas-New Year holiday travel season approaching, the police department reminds residents to be extra cautious and take steps to assure the safety of their homes. Recommendations include:

- Make certain external entrances to the residence are secure. Doors should have deadbolt locks, and patio doors should be locked and barred. Keep garage doors closed.
- Windows should be secured, preferably with locks that can't be reached and opened after the glass is broken. If you have window air conditioners, remove them and secure the windows before leaving home.
- In private dwellings, people often keep money and jewelry in the master bedroom. Choose to take valuables with you or secure them in a safe.
- Let neighbors and property managers know when you will be away so they can keep an eye on your residence.
- Don't post you're your travel plans or holiday locations on social media.
- Install timers or motion detectors on some lights so they activate if someone enters while you are away. Lights can scare an intruder.
- Keep radios playing to deters burglars who may think someone is at home.
- Install a security system that will activate if windows are broken or doors are opened.

HPD encourages anyone in the community who observes suspicious or criminal activity to report it by calling 911. Callers who have information about crimes and wish to remain anonymous may call Crime Solvers at 540-574-5050. Tipsters may also text "HPD" plus their tip to CRIMES (274637).

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