



Thieves are Holiday Shopping Too – Warns VPD and Safer Parking Initiative *Canadian Direct Insurance Tips for Safer Holiday Shopping*

VANCOUVER, December 18, 2008 –Vancouver’s busiest shopping weeks are fast approaching, as visitors flock to the city’s downtown shopping district to buy holiday gifts and enjoy the winter attractions. But, amidst the cheerful festivities criminals see literal treasure-trunks in the busy parking lots that hold thousands of dollars worth of holiday loot.

“Criminals enjoy holiday shopping too, but it’s usually from the trunk of your car,” warns Constable Jeffery Campbell, VPD. “People are doing larger shopping trips and lots of errands during this time of year, so there are lots of valuables being left in unattended vehicles.”

Many Americans are also taking advantage of the weak Canadian dollar by doing their holiday shopping in the City. Constable Campbell also cautions that visitors be extra careful, as thieves favor out-of-province plates over vehicles with local licenses.

“Holiday shoppers should look for the Safer Parking Award logo when choosing where to park,” says Colin Brown, Chief Operating Officer of Canadian Direct Insurance and spokesperson for the Safer Parking Initiative. “The Safer Parking Award has been designated by the Vancouver Police to over 25 parking facilities in Vancouver, which includes several hotel and retail parking facilities.”

“The biggest mistake people make is to leave possessions in-sight,” says Brown. “During the holiday season people are busy and can become careless. It can take under a minute for your car to be robbed, so your quick stop at by the liquor store is an eternity for thieves.”

The VPD is encouraging shoppers to choose parking facility’s with the Safer Parking Award, which identifies parking facilities whose managers and owners have taken extra steps to ensure a safer environment for customers.



Canadian Direct Insurance 10 Tips to Safer Holiday Shopping

- 1. Choose a parking facility with the Safer Parking Award Logo!**
2. Many stores will hold purchases in the store while you shop – no need to leave them in your car.

3. Limit the number of stops you make during the same trip. Every time you leave your car there is an opportunity for thieves to break-in.
4. Do not store gifts or purchases in your trunk – thieves often follow customers out to their car only to break into the trunk when they leave.
5. Use a visible anti-theft device and vehicle immobilizer; they make your car safer and give you a discount on your insurance.
6. Spread out your holiday shopping trips, so gifts don't accumulate in your vehicle.
7. Remove garage door openers and insurance papers from your car. Together they will give a thief your home address, and a way to get in.
8. Don't leave ANY possessions in your vehicle. Leave a sign on your dashboard that says there are no possessions in the car.
9. Choose a parking facility that is clean and bright, has onsite security features and a parking attendant.
10. Make sure the parking facility has noticeable entrance and exit points for vehicles and pedestrians.

About the Safer Parking Initiative

The Safer Parking Initiative, launched in August 2007, is a partnership between the Vancouver Police Department and a coalition of organizations including parking lot owners, operators, businesses and community groups. SPI's mandate is to improve the reality and perception of safety and security in Vancouver parking facilities in order to help reduce crime and increase the public's confidence in Vancouver, making the city an even more desirable destination to work, live and visit. For more information visit www.SaferParkingVancouver.com

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SAFER PARKING AWARD FACILITIES:

- 160 Water St. (EasyPark)
- 701 W. Georgia St. (EasyPark)
- 777 Dunsmuir St. (EasyPark)
- 900 W. Cordova St. (EasyPark)
- Pacific Palisades Hotel (Diamond Parking)
- Jewish Community Centre 950 W. 41st Ave (Diamond Parking)
- Bentall Centre, 540 Thurlow St. (Advanced Parking)
- Bentall Centre, 550 Burrard St. (Advanced Parking)

- Bentall Centre, 1040 W. Pender St. (Advanced Parking)
- 500 W. Cordova St. Harbour Centre (Owned by Polaris Realty, managed by Impark)
- 450 W. Cordova St., Harbour Centre (Owned by Polaris Realty, managed by Impark)
- 999 W. Hastings St. Axa Building (Owned by Polaris Realty, managed by Impark)
- Westin Bayshore Main Parkade, 1620 Bayshore Drive (Managed by Westin)
- Westin Bayshore Central Parkade, 1675 Bayshore Drive (Managed by Westin)
- 1495 W. 8th Ave (Diamond Parking)
- 933 Seymour St. (Diamond Parking)
- Capers Market, 1675 Robson St. (Diamond Parking)
- 1505 Mariners Walk (Diamond Parking)
- 2150 W. Broadway (Diamond Parking)
- 1154 W. Broadway (Diamond Parking)
- 817 Denman St. (Diamond Parking)
- 1420 W. Georgia St. (Diamond Parking)
- 2012 McDonald St. (Diamond Parking)
- 1131 – 1151 Haro St. (In rear alley, Diamond Parking)
- 1034 -1040 Robson St. (in rear alley, Diamond Parking)

FACTS: Parking & Crime in Vancouver

- A recent survey done by the Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association found that parking ranked second among factors that people dislike most about downtown.
- The West End – Coal Harbour Community policing centre cites that theft from vehicles is one of the city’s most pressing issues, and finds higher theft rates within commercial lots, as opposed to residential areas.
- The DVBA’s most recent public survey indicated that 69% of Vancouverites surveyed said they felt safe either “all the time” or “most of the time” downtown. That figure is down from 76% last year.
- Statistics Canada recently reported that two-thirds of all stolen vehicles were taken from public areas such as parking lots and streets, and one-third from private residences.
- The Insurance Bureau of Canada recently reported that the recovery rate for stolen vehicles in Canada continues to decline.
- The Vancouver Board of Trade reported that thefts of vehicles, thefts from vehicles, and vandalism of vehicles (all in the City of Vancouver) cost the community around \$60 million in 2003. In September 2006, the Board reported that theft of autos was down 3.6%, but theft from autos was up 6.5%
- The indirect costs of car theft include: hospitalization/health care, police services, fire & rescue services, and court & judicial processes.
- There are over 400 parking facilities in Vancouver and more than 6,000 parking meters.
- The average Vancouverite pays \$268 for monthly parking, while a top parking spot costs up to \$375, according to a recent CB Richard Ellis survey.