

KNOW THE RULES SAFETY TIPS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

- When in a public facility always supervise your child, and ALWAYS accompany young children to the restroom. Make certain your children know to stay with you at all times while shopping and always CHECK FIRST with you or the person in charge before they go anywhere. It is important to know where your children are and whom they are with at all times.
- If older children become separated from you while holiday shopping, have them meet you in a pre-designated spot such as the sales counter of the store you were in or the mall's information booth. For younger children teach them to look for people who can be sources of help within the store or mall such as a uniformed security officer, salesperson with a nametag, the person in the information booth, or a uniformed law-enforcement officer. They should NEVER leave the store/mall or go to the parking lot to look for you or your car.
- Make visits to the mall opportunities for your children to practice these safe-shopping skills. Teach them how to use a public telephone; locate adult sources of help within the mall or a store; and, for older children, go to the restroom with a friend. Practice having them CHECK FIRST with you before going anywhere within a mall or store. Leave clothing with your children's names displayed at home, as it can bring about unwelcome attention from inappropriate people who may be looking for an opportunity to start a conversation with your children.
- Parents should not leave children alone at public facilities such as video arcades, movie theaters, or playgrounds as a convenient babysitter while they are holiday shopping. Never leave children in toy or specialty stores expecting store personnel to supervise and care for your children. They are not trained in this role, and it is not a function of their employment.
- If you allow your older children to go to the mall or other activities without you, they need to TAKE A FRIEND. It's more fun and much safer. Older children should check in with you on a regular basis while they are out. Make certain a clear plan is in place to pick them up including where, what time, and what to do in case of a change in plans.
- Nothing takes the place of your supervision when you are in a public place with your children. If you are going holiday shopping and feel that you will be distracted, make other arrangements for the care of your children. It is easy for you and your children to get distracted with all the sights, sounds, and crowds of holiday shopping, so make certain they stay with you at all times.