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Don't let the Grinch swoop in and ruin your holidays. Be your own best deterrent to crime.

The Burleson Police Department will be patrolling retail parking lots when you hit the stores for Black Friday specials Nov. 23. This year, some local retailers are offering specials on Thanksgiving night as well.

Law enforcement's focus is on the major shopping areas. The sworn bicycle officer unit and teams of Citizens on Patrol (COPs) members will be out in force.

COPs members wear light blue uniform shirts with light blue COP jackets and ball caps that are marked Citizens On Patrol. Team members in vehicles will be identified with magnetic signs that say Burleson Citizens On Patrol. Some COPs members may be on bicycles. The sworn officer bicycle unit will be in the standard dark blue uniforms.

The traffic unit (motorcycles and slick-top Dodge Chargers) will be on the lookout for unsafe driving in an attempt to prevent crashes. That enforcement includes drivers who fail to yield right-of-way to drivers exiting the highway. If you are driving a vehicle on a road that parallels a highway, you must yield right-of-way to a vehicle exiting the highway or a vehicle entering the highway. They will also be working traffic control at congested driveways such as Hidden Creek Parkway at the Walmart Supercenter.

Shoppers can become frazzled in the frenzy of the season, but police advise everyone to stay alert, pay attention to your surroundings, and pay attention to who is around you. If you are uncomfortable with how close people are to you, create more space between you and them. Other tips include:

- Take only what you need (driver's license, one or two credit cards, minimal cash) and put them in your front pocket, if possible;
- Avoid wearing expensive jewelry;
- If shopping with children, have a plan to meet with store security if you get separated;
- Don't text or talk when walking in to or out of a store;
- Park in a well-lit place, lock your vehicle, and place anything of value in the trunk or out of sight;

- If your vehicle has an alarm or anti-theft device, use it;
- Maintain a line of sight, as much as possible, between your vehicle door and the store's entrance;
- Don't buy more than you can comfortably carry;
- Always ask retail staff to escort you to your vehicle if you make large purchases;
- When possible shop with a family member or friend;
- Be aware of anyone approaching you for any reason as you leave the store;
- Look into your vehicle as you walk up to it;
- Carry a signaling device (whistle, compact air horn);
- When you get close to your vehicle, if you feel distressed, push the panic mode on your vehicle's key fob;
- Always have your keys in your hand and be ready to enter or exit your vehicle when you arrive or leave your destination;
- Do not sit in an idle vehicle because that can make you vulnerable to a criminal;
- Don't park next to large vehicles or large structures that people can hide in or behind;
- When possible, shop during daylight hours.

Police say to be aware of scammers looking for handouts. Some criminals attempt to lure you close to them so they can grab your purse or bags. Say "No Thank you" in a firm voice and keep walking. If they persist, repeat it in a louder, more firm voice to draw the attention of other shoppers.

Always report people who look suspicious. Have a good description of what the person looks like, what they are driving, and their location, when you call 911. And the most important rule? Immediately report any suspicious activity to the local police department.