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\$3 OFF Any Large Chop-Chop

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gestions I can offer to help avoid becoming a victim. First and foremost, do not leave anything of value visible inside your car. If you must temporarily store something in your car, use the trunk and remove it to a more secure location as soon as possible. It only takes a thief a few seconds to break into your vehicle and steal what's inside.

Try not to shop alone. Pairing up with a friend or family member is not only safer, but more enjoyable. If you must shop alone, make sure you appear alert as you move about parking lots and garages. Don't overload yourself with packages, or try to use your Blackberry to retrieve emails while walking to or from your car. Most people tell us they were unaware that they were being watched or followed and about to be victimized.

Criminals depend on using the element of surprise to their best advantage. The best defense is to always be alert and aware about what is going on around you. If you think a strange car may be following you, don't go home; instead detour to a busy public place like a retail area, gas or police station where others are present. If you have a cell phone, dial 911, accurately give your location and describe what is going on. By all means, stay on or head to main thoroughfares until a patrol car arrives on scene. There really is safety in numbers since criminals don't like high activity areas because there are likely to be numerous poten-

tial witnesses present.

Regarding wireless devices, be very aware that anything sent over them is probably not secure and easily obtained by computer hackers. It's as simple as cruising through parking lots with a laptop and readily available software for crooks to get a treasure trove of personal data. Once they have this information, your nightmare of unauthorized charges and unpleasant credit rating disruption begins. Be sure you understand that the inherent risks of using wireless devices for purchases far exceed the convenience they provide.

Every holiday season, the Pinecrest Police Department conducts special undercover details where plainclothes officers patrol in unmarked vehicles, on foot and, at times, on bicycles. Our primary purpose in doing this is to catch criminals in the act. But, we'd much rather eliminate all the opportunities for crime by having an alert citizenry who actively practice crime prevention and report all suspicious activity they see to us. Doing this forces the criminals to work much harder to find convenient victims, and increases our chances for apprehending them.

Please be sure to contact us at 305-234-2100 to report any suspicious activity you may observe. Working together provides our best chance to head criminals off at the pass.

Best wishes for a safe and joyous holiday season.

VILLAGE CRIME BULLETIN

CALL 305-234-5545 FOR "HOT SPOT" CRIME BULLETINS

from THE VILLAGE POLICE DEPARTMENT.

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