

SAFETY TIPS FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON

With the holiday season just around the corner, many families will be busy making their shopping lists and checking them twice! We recommend that you have a talk with your child about safety before heading out to a busy mall this holiday season. Crowds are greater this time of year and children may easily become separated from their parents. If this happens, parents need a plan and children should know what to do.

The Missing Children's Network suggests that you leave young children at home with a trusted babysitter. However, if your child accompanies you to the mall and stores, we would like to remind parents to reinforce the following safety rules:



- As you prepare to leave your home, snap a photo of your child on your smartphone. In the event of an emergency, such as getting separated in a busy public area, you will have a complete description of the clothing your child was wearing;
- When arriving at your destination, identify with your child all the safe people and places where he can seek help if needed;
- Remind your child that he must stay within sight at all times;
- Tell your child to never leave the mall or store without you;
- Always accompany younger children to any public restroom;
- Never leave your child alone in a public place such as a toy store, video arcade, movie theatre or playground;
- If someone tries to take your child out of the mall or store, teach your child to yell: "This is not my Dad (or Mom)! I need help!", then run away and tell a safe adult such as a security guard or store clerk;
- Never leave young children alone in the car, even for a few minutes;
- Respect your child if he shows any distress or discomfort sitting on Santa's lap - keep in mind that your child is learning to trust his instincts by listening to his internal alarm. This may prove invaluable in the event that your child is ever approached by an individual with questionable intentions.

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For older children:

If you feel your child is mature enough to go to the mall without the supervision of an adult, take some time to discuss and set firm guidelines that will ensure his safety:

- Always use the buddy system;
- Make sure he knows how and where to reach you at all times;
- Be sure to teach him how to handle money discreetly in public;
- Agree upon a set time and meeting place to pick him up.

If You See a Child Who Appears Lost:

A missing child is everyone's responsibility. The Missing Children's Network encourages the public to always be alert and report any suspicious situations to the proper authorities. If you ever spot a child who appears lost, we encourage you to:

- Comfort the child but exercise caution and restraint in physically touching the child;
- Ask if he is lost and needs help;
- Keep the child within eyesight and enlist the help of passers-by in order to request the assistance of a store clerk employee. Most stores have established standard operating procedures in the event children are separated from their parents;
- Do not remove the child from the immediate location and never drive away with the child in order to seek help;
- Wait with the child until the proper help arrives.



For Children Travelling Alone this Holiday Season:

If your child is flying or riding a train or bus alone this holiday season, we urge parents to remember the following safety tips:

- When making reservations for your child, specify that your child will be travelling alone;
- Whenever possible, book a non-stop flight. Avoid booking the final flight of the day;
- Visit the airport or terminal with your child so they will not be intimidated and will know what to expect;
- In case of delay or cancellation, remain at the station or gate until your child departs;
- Make sure your child travels with the proper identification, as well as contact information in case of an emergency;
- Always have a back-up plan for the person your child is meeting with at their destination;
- Encourage children not to become too friendly with other passengers, or reveal any personal information.