



# The Defender

December 11, 2009

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## Another Holiday Crime Season Begins

In December, certain crime increases are as predictable as falling temperatures. Here are the most common holiday trends, and how to protect yourself from them:

1. **Thefts from Cars.** As shoppers converge on the mall and department stores, so do thieves. In addition to the GPS systems, laptop computers, satellite radios, iPods, wallets, purses, and other targets that they steal throughout the year, these bandits will also be on the prowl for something special: Christmas presents, conveniently boxed and bagged. This type of crime befalls shoppers who return to their cars with bags full of gifts, unload them, and return to the store to continue shopping. Do your best to avoid leaving *any* items of value inside your car; if you must, conceal them in the trunk or otherwise hide them.



2. **Pocket-picking.** The mass of shoppers at malls and department stores provide easy targets for thieves looking to steal the wallet protruding from the coat pocket, or the purse left alone “just for a minute” at the food court, or the handbag left draped over the back of a diner’s chair. Thieves prize credit cards in these wallets and purses and quickly use the cards to buy thousands of dollars in goods at nearby stores. Carry only the items and credit cards that you actually need, and keep them in your firm possession at all times.



3. **Vandalism to Holiday Decorations.** Every year, groups of idiotic juvenile pranksters slash inflatable yard decorations, cut strings of lights, steal reindeer, and commit other offenses against your holiday cheer. Already this year, on Central Avenue, an inflatable decoration was felled by a vandal. Short of surrounding your decorations in an eight-foot high stockade fence, there’s not much you can do about this—but please report suspicious activity in your yard and your neighbors’.



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### Tips of the Quarter

**Do You Need a Purse?** To a thief, a purse is like a big neon sign flashing “steal me.” Consider shopping without one, and carry only the specific cash and credit cards that you need.

**Write down your credit card numbers and customer service numbers,** and keep them in a safe place. If your wallet or purse is stolen, you’ll want to be able to call all your account holders very quickly.

**Working Out?** Thieves know that your purse or wallet will be unattended while you work out, so they like to break into your car or locker. Make sure you bring your valuables into the gym and secure them in a locked locker.

# Current Patterns and Trends

## Huffing Incidents in November



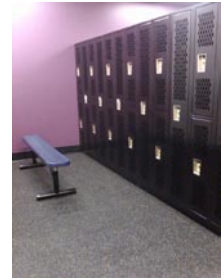
During the month of November, police responded to three separate incidents of youths “huffing,” or inhaling the vapors from aerosol cans, at various Liberty Tree Mall stores. The youths were all between the ages of 18-20, and in each case they were inhaling from cans of “Dust-Off” and suffered a medical reaction. In other parts of the country, teenagers have died from inhaling Dust-Off and similar products.

You can find more information about huffing at <http://www.theantidrug.com>.

## North Face Jacket Theft Trend

Clothing and sporting goods stores throughout Massachusetts have reported an increase this year in shoplifting of North Face jackets. Danvers has had three such thefts, all at the same Mall-area store. One of the Danvers incidents resulted in the arrest of two 29-year-old Revere men on November 5, but there was another incident 10 days later involving two women. Any business that sells these jackets should take appropriate crime prevention steps.

## Purse and Wallet Thefts around Endicott Plaza



During the second half of October, we took eight reports associated with a pattern of purse and wallet thefts, most at Endicott Plaza stores. Shoppers had purses stolen from carts, dressing rooms, and from shelves where they had put down their wallets “just for a minute.” The thieves used the credit cards to buy expensive meals at area restaurants and merchandise at area stores. The pattern dwindled away after the beginning of November, but we have still seen occasional, possibly-related thefts since then. Danvers Police detectives are still tracking down several leads.

## Thieves Hit Planet Fitness Lockers

Patrons of Planet Fitness on Route 1 have reported thefts from their lockers four times this fall. There was one theft each in September, October, November, and December, all during the first 15 days of the month. Three were between 9:00 A.M. and 1:00 P.M. and three were on weekends. In one case the locker was pried, but in the other three they were unlocked. The thief looks for wallets with credit cards, which he then uses in nearby communities.

### Overall Totals

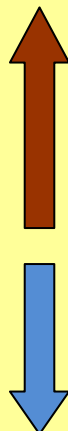
January 1 – December 10

Incident	Usual Range	2009
Robbery	6-14	8
Agg. Assault	25-38	29
Simple Assault	131-171	141
Housebreaks	30-46	29
Comm. Breaks	23-39	18
Theft from Vehic.	191-302	218
Shoplifting	212-289	294
Auto Theft	33-66	21
Fraud/Forgery	93-133	142
Vandalism	234-318	260
Drugs	67-104	59
Disorderly	117-165	119
Noise	344-468	343
False Alarms	1659-2070	1291
MV Accidents	1138-1305	1019

### TrendMeter

October 16 – December 10

Incident	Usual Range	2009	Notes
Youth Disorder	18-35	46	Lots of complaints this fall from Danvers Square merchants
Medical Aids	206-261	277	High with many new assisted living and medical facilities in town
Thefts from Persons	2-7	8	Pattern of purse and wallet thefts around the Endicott Street/Mall area
False Alarms	281-348	192	Significant decrease, probably due to increased fines that took effect on January 1, 2009
Drunk Driving	10-18	5	Lowest fall total since 1998; last year there were 18 during the same period.
Vandalism	46-63	36	Very little vandalism around Halloween; no other patterns
Motor Vehicle Accidents	196-233	177	Lowest totals in a decade, corresponding with increased enforcement and reduced traffic



## Incidents of Note

**Brawl at Jimmy's Allenhurst:** The night of Friday, September 18, brought a large birthday party to Jimmy's Allenhurst involving many members of an extended family. Several guests got into a dispute over some past issues, and it erupted into a full brawl in which a 29-year-old Winchester man was struck with a candlestick and burned with a cigarette, knocked to the ground punched and kicked in the head and torso, causing a concussion and orbital fracture. The assailants fled before police arrived. Arrest warrants were obtained for a 20-year-old Lowell man, a 30-year-old Southboro man, a 27-year-old Boston man, and a 21-year-old Framingham man.

**Citizen's Bank Robbed:** Just after noon on Sunday, September 27, a man in his 30s approached a teller at the Citizen's Bank in the Danvers Plaza Stop & Shop and passed a note demanding money. He fled with over \$2000 in a black Nissan with another driver. Investigation led to the identification of the robber as a 39-year-old Cambridge man, and he was soon arrested in Peabody by the State Police.

**Chainsaw Attack:** A domestic dispute erupted into violence on Sunday morning, October 11. A 35-year-old Putnam Lane man revved up a chainsaw and attacked the house where his wife and family were speaking to police officers about an earlier dispute. Officers confronted him outside, where he approached them with the chainsaw running, but was ultimately persuaded to put it down. The man was arrested on scene and was ultimately sentenced to six months in jail.



**Copper Theft:** In a relatively rare incident for 2009, over \$10,000 in copper wire was stolen from a construction trailer on Cherry Hill Drive on the night of Sunday, November 8.



**Purse Snatching at Endicott Plaza:** Just before noon on Saturday, November 21, a 23-year-old woman was sitting in her car in the Endicott Plaza lot when a man wrenched open the door and stole her purse from the seat next to her. She jumped out and tried to retrieve it,

but he ripped it out of her hands and fled in an older model black Volkswagen Jetta with a female driver and another man in the car. The victim suffered an injured shoulder.

**Theft by COMCAST Employee:** On Monday, November 23, an Endicott Green resident found a Rolex watch missing from her apartment just after a COMCAST employee performed a cable upgrade. Officers caught up with the man—37 years old, from Derry, NH—at the building and found the stolen watch, along with other jewelry, in his car and also discovered that he had an active warrant from New Hampshire. He was arrested on scene.

**Daytime Housebreak:** During the daytime on Tuesday, November 24, a burglar entered a Richards Street residence through an unlocked door and stole a high-definition television set and jewelry.

**Good Samaritan Saves Accident Victim:** In a widely-reported incident, just after midnight on Wednesday, November 25, a woman lost control of her vehicle and ran into a tree in front of a Strawberry Hill Lane residence. The vehicle caught fire, but before the dazed driver could suffer severe burns, the 24-year-old resident of the house ran outside in his pajamas and pulled her to safety just as the fire engulfed the car.

**Arrests in GPS Theft:** At 3:20 P.M. on Friday, November 27, a 26-year-old Revere man and a 26-year-old Lynn man pulled in to the Strike One parking lot on Route 1, smashed the window of a



Honda Odyssey, and stole the GPSs within. Strike One's surveillance identified the suspects' vehicle and they were stopped by the Middleton Police at the Crowne Plaza. During the arrest, the offenders were found to have stolen goods in their car and one of them was wanted for a Topsfield house burglary.

**Jewelry Burglary:** During the day on Monday, November 30, a burglar crept in to a High Street residence and stole \$5000 in jewelry from the bedroom.

## DPD Gets New Storage Shed

Students from the North Shore Vocational and Technical School are putting finishing touches on the Danvers Police Department's new bicycle storage shed, located to the side of the police department. The shed replaces an unsightly storage pod that has been costing the police department a monthly fee.

The shed will be used to store found and recovered bicycles that cannot be traced back to their owners. We accumulate dozens of such bikes every year and sell them at an annual auction.

The P.S. Sash Company of Salem laid the foundation for the shed; Martins Construction and Home Depot in Danvers supplied construction materials; and Benevento Sand and Stone in Wilmington donated sand and cement. The project has been entirely free to the police department and, consequently, to Danvers taxpayers.



## DPD Receives Grants

The Danvers Police Department received two important grants this fall:

- \$5000 from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security to promote pedestrian, bicycle, and moped safety. We have and will use these funds to purchase banners and signs to educate drivers about the importance of yielding for pedestrians in crosswalks. The funds will also be used for targeted enforcement at different crosswalks in town.
- \$10,000 from the U.S. Department of Justice for community programs such as our Citizens' Police

Academy, our RAD programs, neighborhood watches, and juvenile probation checks. These funds are part of the Recovery Act.

## Crime and the Economy

Most people assume that in a bad economy, crime increases. Surely, they think, as unemployment and poverty increase, more people get desperate and turn to crime.

In fact, the reverse is generally true. While a very long recession or a depression can, in fact, lead to increased crime (along with all kinds of other societal upheavals), a couple of years of recession actually help crime to decrease. To understand why, we must remember that crime occurs when a motivated offender encounters a suitable target at a time and place where there is an absence of capable guardianship (in criminal justice, we call this [Routine Activities Theory](#)). Remove any of these elements and a crime cannot occur.

While a recession may slowly increase the number of motivated offenders (and it *is* slowly; non-criminals do not suddenly turn in to criminals because they need money), it also greatly reduces the number of suitable targets. Fewer people shopping and going out means fewer cars parked in parking lots, and fewer potential victims to pickpocket or rob. It also increases guardianship at key locations: more unemployed people means more people at home during the day, which helps prevent burglaries. Even many violent crimes depend on interactions between people that don't occur when people are spending more time at home. It may be in part because of these reasons that, for instance, residential burglary in Danvers is down 23% so far this year and thefts from vehicles are down 11%. In New York City, overall crime is down about 13 percent compared to last year, and Los Angeles was reporting double-digit decreases earlier this year.

There's a good discussion of this phenomenon [at this link](#), if you want to read more about crime and the economy.

### Parking Ban in Effect

The annual "all night parking ban" took effect on December 1 and continues through Thursday, April 1, 2010. Any vehicle parked on a public street for more than one hour between the hours of 1:00 A.M. and 6:00 A.M. is subject to a \$15 fine and possible towing.