

24 Days of Safety 2021

This December, the Naperville Police Department's Safer Naper campaign will provide daily seasonal safety tips in the form of a 24 Days of Safety campaign!

Our days will focus on different seasonal safety topics and offer short prevention tips. Topics will range from safe decorating for the holidays to keeping your purse/wallet secure while shopping. Additional topics will include winter driving tips, some COVID-19 reminders and the importance of keeping valuables out of sight – both in your vehicle and your home.

Visit the Naperville Police Department online (www.naperville.il.us/asafernaper), on Facebook (www.facebook.com/napervillepd) or on Twitter (www.twitter.com/napervillepd) to catch up and keep up with the daily holiday-related safety tips.

Have a safe, healthy and happy holiday season.

Day 1 – Plan for a Healthy Holiday Season

This holiday season keep your family and friends safe and healthy during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic by becoming familiar with current CDC recommendations on protecting yourself and your loved ones. You can current guidelines and recommendations on the [CDC's website](#).

Day 2 – Lock It or Lose It

In 2020, 88% of all burglaries to motor vehicles reported in Naperville were to unlocked cars. Similarly, 90% of all stolen motor vehicles reported here were unlocked cars with the keys left inside. Here are a few simple ways you can avoid falling victim to such crimes:

- Don't leave vehicles unattended with the doors unlocked, windows down or the keys in them, even in your garage or driveway.
- Always take your car keys with you and lock your car doors.
- Take valuables with you or keep them out of sight by placing them in the trunk or using stow-and-go seating, preferably before arriving at your destination.
- Park in well-lit areas.

Day 3 – Securing Deliveries

Prevent thieves from stealing your packages by following these simple tips:

- Schedule packages to arrive when you're home.
- Require signature for delivery – This is particularly helpful when you want to be sure important or valuable items are not left unattended.
- Install security cameras – Be sure it is visible and in working order. Cameras only deter criminals if they know one is present.
- Sign up for delivery alerts – Most major shipping companies offer this service. So, if you are not home, you can contact a friend or family member to retrieve the package as soon as it's delivered.
- Have packages delivered to another location, like a trusted neighbor's house, your work (if allowed) or a smart locker.
- Leave delivery instructions – Request your packages be placed in a less conspicuous spot, such as a side or back door, behind a planter or in another location not visible from the street.

Day 4 – Safe Decorating

Trees

- When purchasing an artificial tree, look for the label “Fire Resistant.”
- When purchasing a live tree, check for freshness! Also, cut a few inches off the trunk to expose fresh wood to allow for better water absorption, and keep the stand filled with water!

Candles

- Never leave a burning candle unattended.
- Place candles out of reach of children and pets.
- Keep wicks trimmed to one-quarter inch.
- Make sure you have working smoke alarms.

Lights

- Never use electric lights on a metallic tree. The tree can become charged with electricity from faulty lights.
- Before using lights outdoors, check labels to be sure they have been certified for outdoor use.
- Before using lights, make sure there are no frayed wires, broken sockets or loose connections.
- Turn off all lights when you go to bed or leave the house.

Day 5 – Holiday Self Care Tips

There are infinite ways to engage in self-care activities. These are a few of our favorite things!

Doing something for others, and even with others can be a very gratifying altruistic act! Try cooking a meal or baking something sweet for someone you care about.

The holidays can bring up a lot of different emotions for many different reasons. Instead of keeping everything in, let it out with someone you trust!

It's easy to stretch ourselves thin during the holidays. Instead of saying yes to all things, be intentional. Guard your time, make healthy choices, stick with a budget, and carve out time for self-care!

Day 6 – Internet Shopping Safety

- Use a secure internet connection. Don't make purchases via a public Wi-Fi, instead use a Virtual Private Network (VPN) or your own phone as a hotspot.
- Keep current with your software updates and virus protection on all internet connected devices (PC's, smartphones and tablets).
- Use a credit card for purchases rather than a debit card.
- Use secure sites only. Look for “https” at the beginning of a web sites address.
- Create strong unique passwords.
- Don't click on the link. Be wary of pop-up ads encouraging you to click on links. Go directly to the website instead.
- Sign up for email/text "transaction alerts" from your bank to keep track of your purchases.
- With limited quantities and supply chain issues on many popular items, be wary of items being sold at deals too good to be true.

Day 7 – Mental Wellness – VIDEO

This can be a very tough time of year for many. If you need to, please reach out for help.

Emergency: 9-1-1

Crisis Text Line: Text 'REACH' to 741741

Suicide Hotline: 1-800-273-8255

Drug and Alcohol Treatment Helpline: 1-800-662-4357

National Eating Disorder Helpline: 1-800-931-2237

LGBTQ Support Line: 1-866-488-7386

Veteran Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255

Sexual Assault Hotline: 1-800-656-4673

Day 8 – Winter Safety Kit for Cars

Carry items in your vehicle to handle common winter driving-related tasks, such as cleaning off your windshield, as well as any supplies you might need in an emergency. Here are a few suggestions:

- Snow shovel, broom, and ice scraper.
- Abrasive material such as sand or kitty litter, in case your vehicle gets stuck in the snow.
- Jumper cables, flashlight, and warning devices such as flares and emergency markers.
- Blankets for protection from the cold.
- A cell phone with charger, water, food, and any necessary medicine (for longer trips or when driving in lightly populated areas).

Day 9 – Cold Weather Cons

As the temperature starts to dip, scammers are taking advantage of the cold weather by trying to swindle you out of your money. Here are a few things to remember to help protect your assets:

- The City of Naperville will never call you and threaten to terminate your heat or electric service due to a past due bill. Scammers are using the idea of being without heat or electric in the cold as a scare tactic.
- If you are overdue on your utility account, the City of Naperville will send you a correspondence in the mail. In most cases, multiple notifications will be sent. No solicitation of payment is done over the phone.
- Beware of “spoofing software” that may falsely display the name and phone number of your utility company on your caller ID.
- Scammers use scare tactics such as intimidation and threats to request payment via hard-to-trace prepaid debit cards (green dot) or ask for your credit card information.

Day 10 – 9 PM Routine

Humans are creatures of habit. Get into the habit each night of making sure you've secured your home and vehicle and taken proactive steps to combat auto thefts and break-ins. The 9 PM Routine empowers residents to develop their own personal security routines by having a designated time to perform these tasks every night. Set a reminder for 9 p.m. to go through the following checklist to make sure your property is secure:

- Remove any valuables from vehicles left outside overnight. Remember, NEVER leave your keys or garage door opener in your vehicle.
- Lock vehicle doors.

24 Days of Safety 2021

- Close the overhead garage door.
- Close and lock all exterior doors and windows. Don't forget to lock the service door from your garage to your house.
- Turn on exterior lights and leave them on until dawn.

Day 11 – Winter Driving Tips – VIDEO

Stay Alert

- Keep your gas tank close to full.
- If road conditions are hazardous, avoid driving if possible.
- On longer trips, plan enough time to stop to stretch, get something to eat, return calls or text messages, and change drivers or rest if you feel drowsy.

Avoid Risky Driving Behaviors

- Do not text or engage in any activities that may distract you while driving.
- Obey all posted speed limits, but drive even slower if necessary for weather conditions.
- Drive sober. Alcohol and drugs impair perception, judgment, motor skills, and memory – the skills critical for safe and responsible driving.

Driving in Winter Conditions

- Drive slowly. It's harder to control or stop your vehicle on a slick or snow-covered surface.
- On the road, increase your following distance enough so that you'll have plenty of time to stop for vehicles ahead of you.
- Know whether your vehicle has an antilock brake system and learn how to use it properly. Antilock brake systems prevent your wheels from locking up during braking. If you have antilock brakes, apply firm, continuous pressure to the brake pedal. If you don't have antilock brakes, you may need to pump your brakes if you feel your wheels starting to lock up.

Day 12 – Purse/Wallet Safety

Busy stores with distracted shoppers are prime targets for purse and wallet snatchers. Protect your valuables:

- Always keep your purse closed/zipped.
- Never leave your purse unattended or open in a shopping cart.
- Invest in a crossbody bag that you can wear in front of you.
- Keep your wallet in your front pocket, not the back.

Day 13 – Using Online Marketplaces

As the popularity of online marketplaces continues to increase, so does our concern for residents' safety when meeting with strangers to complete a transaction that began online.

Please use our lobby at 1350 Aurora Ave. or our dedicated parking spots to complete these types of transactions! Remember, if someone doesn't agree to meet you at the police department, they're probably not someone you want to be doing business with!

Find more tips at www.naperville.il.us/internetsafesalezone

Day 14 – You Drink, You Drive, You Lose

Every day, about 28 people in the U.S. die in drunk-driving crashes. That's one person every 52 minutes and more than 10,000 lives each year (NHTSA). Here are some tips to protect yourself and others:

- Plan your safe ride home before you attend a gathering.
- If someone you know has been drinking, do not let that person get behind the wheel. Take their keys and help them arrange a sober ride home.
- If you drink, do not drive for any reason. Call a taxi, a ride-sharing service or a sober friend.
- If you're hosting a gathering where alcohol will be served, make sure all guests leave with a sober driver.
- Always wear your seat belt – it's your best defense against impaired drivers.

Day 15 – Animal Safety Tips – VIDEO

- Provide a safe haven for your stressed pet to avoid holiday noise and excitement.
- Decorate with pet-safe plants. Many plants such as mistletoe, holly and poinsettias can be toxic to animals.
- Anchor the Christmas tree and avoid using tinsel or edible tree decorations that could be ingested.
- Keep pets away from lit candles.
- Be sure to protect your pets from the outside elements.
- If you suspect animal abuse, cruelty or neglect, call Naperville Animal Crime Stoppers at (630) 420-6006 and leave an anonymous tip.

Day 16 – QR Code Scams

QR Codes are appearing everywhere, to point consumers to their apps, track packages, or view menus. But because these codes can't be read by the human eye, they have become a way for scammers to disguise malicious links.

For example, you might receive an email, a direct message on social media, a text message, a flyer, or a piece of mail that includes a QR code. You are supposed to scan the code with your phone's camera, and it will open a link. In some scams, the QR code takes you to a [phishing website](#), where you are prompted to enter your personal information or login credentials for scammers to steal. Other times, [con artists use QR codes](#) to automatically launch payment apps or follow a malicious social media account.

How to Avoid QR Scams

- **If someone you know sends you a QR code, confirm before scanning it.** Whether you receive a text message from a friend or a message on social media from your workmate, contact that person directly before you scan the QR code to make sure they haven't been hacked.
- **Don't open links from strangers.** If you receive an unsolicited message from a stranger, don't scan the QR code, even if they promise you exciting gifts or investment opportunities.
- **Verify the source.** If a QR code appears to come from a reputable source, it's wise to double check. If the correspondence appears to come from a government agency, call or visit their official website to confirm.
- **Be wary of short links.** If a URL-shortened link appears when you scan a QR code, understand that you can't know where the code is directing you. It could be hiding a malicious URL.

- **Watch out for advertising materials that have been tampered with.** Some scammers attempt to mislead consumers by altering legitimate business ads by placing stickers or the QR code. Keep an eye out for signs of tampering.
- **Install a QR scanner with added security.** Some antivirus companies have QR scanner apps that check the safety of a scanned link before you open it. They can identify phishing scams, forced app downloads, and other dangerous links.

Day 17 – Report Suspicious Activities

Public safety and security is everyone’s responsibility. If you see suspicious activity, report it to local law enforcement or a person of authority using the “5W’s”:

WHO did you see?

WHAT did you see?

WHEN did you see it?

WHERE did it occur?

WHY is it suspicious?

Source: Department of Homeland Security

Day 18 – Avoid COVID Scams

- COVID-19 vaccines are free. If anyone charges you for help signing up or the shot itself, it’s a scam.
- You can’t buy the COVID-19 vaccine anywhere. It’s only available at federal- and state-approved locations.
- Always talk with your doctor or healthcare professional before you try any product claiming to treat, prevent, or cure COVID-19.
- Don’t post your vaccination card to your social media account. Someone could use the information for identity theft.
- Right now, there are no official plans to create a national vaccine verification app, certificate or passport. If someone asks you for personal information or money to get a national vaccine certificate or passport, it’s a scam.
- Contact your state government about its vaccine verification plans and requirements.
- Check with airlines, cruise lines, and event venues about their vaccine verification or negative testing requirements.
- When you’re looking for pandemic-related help, start with sites like [coronavirus.gov](https://www.coronavirus.gov) and [usa.gov/coronavirus](https://www.usa.gov/coronavirus).

Day 19 – Gift Card Scams – VIDEO

Gift cards are for gifts, not for payments. If someone calls with urgent news or a convincing story and then pressures you to pay them by buying a gift card, like an iTunes or Google Play card, and then giving them the codes on the back of the card – stop. It’s a scam!

- When purchasing a gift card make sure it does not appear to have been tampered with, or the PIN is exposed.
- Look closely at the sticker covering the security code.
- Don’t buy the top gift card right off the rack.

24 Days of Safety 2021

- Register your card (if the retailer offers that option). This makes it easier to track and quickly report any misuse.
- Buy cards directly from the business if possible.
- Beware of bogus gift card ads that pop up on your social media feed and claim to offer exclusive deals online. They may be phony cards.

DAY 20 – Substance Use/Abuse

Teens/Children:

Every year thousands of children are hospitalized after taking medicine not meant for them. Teens share stolen prescription drugs and toddlers are tempted by colorful pills that look like candy. Be thoughtful of where you keep your medications in your home. Keep medications in a secure location that is not easily accessible by unintended audiences. Store medications up, away and out of sight of children.

Adults:

Did you know that addiction to drugs or alcohol is a mental illness? Substance use disorder changes normal desires and priorities. It changes normal behaviors and interferes with the ability to work, go to school, and to have good relationships with friends and family. The Naperville Police Department's Connect for Life Program is available for individuals and families struggling with this disease. Contact the Connect for Life Program at (630) 305-7032 or Sergeant Derek Zook at zookd@naperville.il.us for support.

Seniors:

It can be hard to think of our senior loved ones struggling with alcohol or substance use, however, it may be more common than you think. According to the National Institute on Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse (NIAAA), alcohol and prescription drug abuse affects up to 17% of adults over the age of 60. Addiction among seniors is often underestimated and under-diagnosed, preventing this population getting the help they may need.

Day 21 – Be Aware of Your Surroundings

With the hustle and bustle of this time of year, it's important to stay alert, avoid distractions and be aware of your surroundings. By practicing situational awareness, you can avoid being in dangerous situations and even identify criminal behavior. Here are a few tips to help you hone this personal safety skillset:

- **Identify Your Surrounding:** The first step in achieving situational awareness is to become aware of what is around you. Identify the type of environment are you in, large crowd compared to a secluded area. Observe other people and their actions.
- **Trust Your Feelings:** Listen to your gut. When you have a feeling that something is wrong, trust it. It is better to be wrong and safe than ignore the feeling and expose your or your family to danger. If you think a crime is about to be committed, call 9-1-1.
- **Avoid Complacency:** Actively keep yourself in the right mindset. Never assume that because you've done something safely before that nothing will happen this time. Continue to challenge yourself and those around you to be prepared for contingencies. Do a mental check every now and then.

- **Have a Plan:** Talking with your family about what to do in different situations will prepare them for when it happens. Knowing what to do beforehand will allow you to stay calm and better handle the situation. Create preparedness and response plans with your family to address likely risks.

Day 22 – Domestic Violence Resources

Did you know that many domestic violence service providers report that calls for assistance and services actually decrease during the holiday season? Victims oftentimes feel additional pressures during the holidays to hold their family together (especially for children) so they can experience the magic of the holidays and the normalcy of sharing a meal and opening presents as a family. After the holidays however, there is an increase in calls for assistance and services, so the holidays provide a unique opportunity to share resources and support victims. If you know someone in an abusive relationship:

- Reinforce that you care for them and are available to listen free from judgement. Make sure you are communicating with them in a way that feels safe for them, as abusers oftentimes may monitor their electronic devices.
- Offer to be a part of their support network if and when they do decide to leave. Simple gestures like offering to watch children while they attend to other matters or offering to accompany them while they reach out for help can go a long way.
- Continue to include them in holiday activities even if they decline to attend. Many domestic violence situations include the abuser working to isolate the victim from loved ones, but knowing the invitation is there shows your support.
- Let the victim know that resources exist (hotlines, shelters, advocates, legal assistance, etc.) and provide them with these supports, but do not dictate if or how they reach out. Victims benefit from re-empowerment and the ability to make their own choices, which is something they don't generally have in their relationship with their abuser.

For more information and resources, visit www.naperville.il.us/domesticviolence.

Day 23 – Keeping Valuables Out of Sight

Burglaries are often crimes of opportunity. Be sure to minimize your risk of victimization by keeping valuables out of sight! While you're out shopping, put your purchases in the trunk or use stow-and-go seating. At home, consider closing the blinds or curtains in first-floor rooms, putting high-value items in an inconspicuous container or stowing valuables in a safe. And, of course, lock your vehicle and your home!

Day 24 – Enjoy the Season – VIDEO

As our 24 Days of Safety campaign wraps up, we encourage you to take a moment to relax, reflect and enjoy the season. Stay safe, stay healthy and stay tuned for 2022's Safer Naper campaign!