

YOUR
Merry Christmas

HOME

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TIPS AND TRENDS TO HELP MAXIMIZE HOME BUYING AND SELLING

Prevent Holiday Theft

'Tis the season for holiday shopping, but it's also the season for holiday thievery. The Identity Theft Resource Center (ITRC) in San Diego, Calif., estimates that 15 million people are victims of identity theft every year. The not-for-profit group reports that it gets more calls about lost and stolen wallets and purses during the holiday season than at any other time of the year. To make sure identity theft does not spoil your holidays, the ITRC has several tips for safeguarding your personal data.



- Never share your social security or credit card numbers in a public environment. Instead of verbally sharing requested sensitive information, write it down for the clerk, then take the slip of paper home with you. Also when talking on your cell phone in public, don't give any personal information over the phone.
- Keep store receipts in your wallet, not inside the bag with your purchase.
- Carry only what you need when shopping, and make sure to keep purses, backpacks and bags zipped or fastened shut to deter pickpockets.
- Use debit cards judiciously or leave them at home — they are a direct link to your bank account. By using credit cards instead, you can review the billing statement afterward and dispute any suspected fraudulent activity.
- When shopping online, print out the Web page describing the item(s) you ordered, as well as any e-mail messages and contact information for the online seller.
- Do not provide your social security number, birth date or mother's maiden name in an e-mail or within a Web site.
- Make sure the latest anti-virus software is installed on your computer before shopping online.

Pet-Friendly Moving Tips

Moving to a new home can be a stressful experience for many homeowners. But imagine how it can affect your pet. The Humane Society of the United States has a few tips for owners to help make Fido or Snowball feel more comfortable during the transition.

Before moving in, remove odors from previous pets. Moving into a home where other pets resided previously might encourage your pet to mark its territory.

On moving day, confine your pet to a safe, quiet place with favorite toys, familiar blankets, food and water. When the moving is complete, allow your pet to explore the home with you. Show your pet where you placed the favorite food bowl, bed, toys and litter box so they can become more familiar with their surroundings. For more moving tips for pets and pet owners, visit the Humane Society Web site, www.hsus.org.

