The holiday season is upon us and that means many will be heading out to find those perfect presents. The day after Thanksgiving, also known as Black Friday, is the biggest shopping day of the year. The St. Joseph Police Department would like you to keep a few safety tips in mind on that day and throughout the holiday shopping season.

Before you even head out to go shopping, make a reference list of phone and account numbers for all your credit cards and keep it in a safe place at your home. Use a credit card to avoid thefts of large amounts of cash that are irreplaceable. Shopping with a single credit card is preferable because it’s easier to cancel one rather than several if your wallet or purse are stolen. If possible, try carrying your keys, cash and credit cards separate from each other.

Other tips to follow while out in the stores this holiday season include:

- You should never leave a purse unattended in a shopping cart where it is more susceptible to theft.

- For freedom of motion and clear visibility, do not overload yourself with bags when leaving a store and returning to your car. It’s difficult to defend yourself when you’re carrying a lot of packages.

- Use ATMs in well-populated, well-lit locations. Do not throw ATM receipts away at the ATM location.

- Remember, there is always increased safety in numbers. Avoid walking alone and leave malls and stores well before closing time to assure a more active parking lot.

Holiday safety isn’t just for while you browse the store looking for all those gifts on your list. There are also some tips to keep in mind while out in the parking lots and on the roads. Avoid parking next to vans and large trucks blocking your space from vision of others. Make sure you lock all doors and roll up all windows even when leaving the car for a short period of time. Also, make sure to keep your kids close when getting in and out of your car.

During the day, opt to park farther away from buildings to reduce the chance of dings from car doors or shopping carts. If you venture out at night, avoid parking in secluded areas and park directly under lights whenever possible. It’s also important to make a mental note or write down exactly where you park your car to avoid wandering around longer than necessary.

Once in your car, leave promptly and avoid sitting in the parking lot with your attention on something other than your surroundings, such as your cell phone. When backing out of a parking spot, be aware of waiting cars, others who are backing out, speeding motorists and pedestrians walking.

It’s important to have a safe and happy holiday season. For more holiday shopping tips, visit the police department’s page at stjoemo.org.