

From the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children:

How Parents Can Keep Children Safe While Shopping and Traveling this Holiday Season

Parents need to talk with children about safety before heading out to a busy shopping mall or boarding a plane, train, or bus this holiday season. Crowds are greater this time of year and children may easily become separated from their parents, causing confusion and fear. If that should happen, parents need a plan and children should know what to do.

Unfortunately many adults and children don't know what to do if they lose each other in a public place or are faced with other unsafe situations, that is why the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children is offering advice on how to remain safe and avoid panic and potential dangers

ALWAYS

- Keep children with you at all times while shopping.
- Accompany and supervise children in public facilities, including restrooms.
- Have a plan in case you become separated, including a pre-designated spot to meet.
- Teach children to look for people who can help, such as a uniformed security officer, salesperson or mother with children.
- Remind children to remain in the area where they become separated.

NEVER

- Dress children in clothing that displays their first or last names, prompting unwelcome attention from people looking for an opportunity to start a conversation with your child.
- Leave children in toy stores or public facilities expecting supervision from store personnel.
- Go shopping or attend a public event with a child if you feel you're going to be distracted. Make other arrangements for child care ahead of time.
- Allow younger children to shop on their own to purchase surprise gifts for friends or family members.
- Drop off older children at a mall or public place without agreeing on a clear plan for picking them up, including: where, what time, and what to do in case of a change in plans.

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

- When you make reservations for your child, specify that the child will be traveling alone.
- Whenever possible, book a non-stop flight or direct route. Avoid booking the last flight of the day.
- Plan to visit the airport, train or bus terminal prior to departure. Let your child know what to expect, so the experience will not be so intimidating.
- In case of delay or cancellation, remain at the station or gate until the train, plane or bus departs.
- Make sure children travel with proper identification and parents or guardian contact information.
- Always have a back-up plan for the person or people meeting the plane at the destination, in case they are delayed.
- Encourage children not to become too friendly with other passengers or to reveal any personal information.

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