



Ensuring a Financially Safe Holiday

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Summer means vacation time. Schools are closed and so most parents choose this time to take their annual vacation. This week's column will attempt to provide holidaymakers with some personal and financial safety tips regarding the use of credit cards and ATM machines. Increasingly, people are foregoing cash and traveler's cheques in favour of credit and debit cards so the following tips should prove useful while vacationing.

- **Stay Alert:** Be aware of your surroundings when you use an ATM, especially at night. If you have a vehicle, it's best to park in a well lit area and if possible, have someone accompany you.
- **Be Prepared:** To complete your transaction safely, have your card ready before arriving at the ATM. when you have completed your transaction, pocket your card, receipt and cash immediately. You can count the cash later.
- **Treat Your Credit Card Like Cash:** Guard your credit card as carefully as you do cash and cheques. Never give account numbers or card information over the phone, unless absolutely necessary.
- **Keep Your Personal Identification Number (PIN) Secret:** Don't write your PIN on your card or keep it in your wallet. Memorize your number and do not give it to anyone-not even family members. If you do not remember your PIN, do not attempt to use the card with an incorrect PIN more than twice. Remember, on the third incorrect attempt, the ATM will confiscate the card.
- **Save Your Receipts:** Keep all receipts until after you have returned from vacation so that you can reconcile your purchases with your statements when they come.
- **Report a Lost or Stolen Card Immediately:** In the event that your card is lost, it is imperative that you report it immediately. This will prevent unscrupulous persons from using your card to purchase items. Credit card companies usually provide a toll free number which clients can call to report such incidents. This number however, should be kept separate from the card or given to another trusted

individual. This ensures that the toll-free number is not lost too if the card or wallet is stolen.

- ***Be on Guard.*** Criminals have become increasingly advanced and are now able to manipulate ATM machines. If you have any suspicions about a particular machine, walk away.

Vacation time should be a time for relaxation and enjoyment, but you must be aware of your surroundings and not make yourself vulnerable to unscrupulous characters. Ensure that you have an enjoyable and financially safe holiday.