Crime Prevention Unit

Sheriff Michael L. Chapman
LOUDOUN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Loudoun County Sheriff's Office
Neighborhood Watch Newsletter

February 2016, Issue 50

Important Numbers

EMERGENCY- 911

Non- Emergency
703-777-1021
703-777-0445

Poison Control
1-800-222-1222

Animal Control
703-777-0406

Narcotic Tip Line
703-779-0552

Crime Solvers
703-777-1919

Administration
703-777-0407

Traffic Hotline
703-771-5798

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH IS ALWAYS ON THE JOB!

Post-Holiday Fraud Prevention

As we begin to settle down from the holiday rush and try to get back in to our daily routines we need to be mindful of a few things.

This time of year is a prime time for identity thieves to collect information on citizens. Citizens often discard gift receipts, bills, invoices, and statements with other holiday trash. These items are all that is necessary for identity thieves to take advantage of your good name.

Here are a few tips to help combat this type of crime and keep your financial and personal information safe.

- Save all receipts, invoices, and bills. Check them carefully against your bank and credit card statements.
- Continue to retain your receipts even after the purchase has cleared your account. That way you can identify any suspicious transactions.
- When ready to dispose of your receipts be sure to shred and dispose of them in a responsible manner.
- Obtain a copy of your credit report and look for any new inquiries or accounts. Identity Theft and Credit Card fraud are popular crimes during the holiday season.

If you believe you have been the victim of credit card, bank fraud, or identity theft contact law enforcement immediately and make a report.

Non-Emergency:703-777-1021

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Post-Holiday Burglary

As we begin a new year and start to put the holidays behind, remember thieves are still afoot. As we begin to discard boxes and wrapping please keep in mind that you do not want to advertise what you may have received as gifts. Burglars will watch trash in attempts to gain information concerning would be items of interest. By watching the outgoing trash burglars can preplan their crime and can prepare to take larger more expensive items such a HD televisions. By following a few easy tips you can make it more difficult for burglars to know what may potentially be in your home, as well as increase the chances of recovering stolen property if your home is burglarized.

1. Cut boxes down and place in garbage bags.
2. Do not place trash out at the curb until the morning when trash pickup is taking place.
3. Keep instruction manuals in a safe location. Do not discard right away.
4. Document the Make, Model, and Serial Number for any expensive electronic items.
5. For items that do not have serial numbers, take several digital pictures showing the item from different angles. This is especially important for items like jewelry.
6. Don't discard intact receipts in you normal trash. Burglars have been known to go through trash for indicators of what may be in the home. Shred your receipt once you no longer need them.
7. As your remove holiday decorations, remember to lock the windows. First floor windows are a preferred access point to burglars.
8. Be very weary of solicitors this time of year. Burglars will sometimes pose as solicitors to get a quick look inside a home. If a solicitor rings your door bell, your first question should be to see their Sheriff's Office issued solicitors permit. If they do not have a permit or refuse to show you their issued permit, contact the Sheriff's Office immediately at our non-emergency number **703-777-1021**
9. Report any suspicious person(s) you may see in your neighborhood. Burglaries are not random acts. Burglars generally have some information about the residence they are going to target.
10. When in doubt, if it seems out of place or suspicious it probably is. Call the Sheriff's Office and let us check it out before a crime can occur.

Remember:

You are the eyes and ears of your community.

Operation Inventory

Operation Inventory is a prevention based program that is designed to encourage citizens to document their valuable property. Key information such as Make, Model and Serial Number are critical information that law enforcement uses to identify stolen property and aids in the return of stolen property back to its lawful owners.

Burglars and thieves expect people not to have this information properly documented. This lack of information prevents stolen property from being entered into national data bases. In many cases once the property is no longer in the jurisdiction where it was stolen, the chances of recovery are greatly diminished. The national data bases are critical in the prosecution of thieves and the recover of stolen property.

To get more information of this prevention program please go to http://sheriff.loudoun.gov/operation-inventory .

IRS/Tax Scams

With tax season rapidly approaching everyone should be aware that this time of year brings out criminals attempting to scam unsuspecting community members. These scammers will use high pressure tactics and threats of arrest and imprisonment to intimidate their victims. Here are some indicators that the caller might be a scammer.

1: If they ask you to pay your bill using a GreenDot money card or other preloaded debt card.

2: If the number that comes up on your caller ID is different than the number they want to you to call them back on. These scammers use internet technology to make the call look official.

3: If the caller has a heavy foreign accent or uses incorrect terms for the subject matter they are talking about.

4: If the caller cannot provide your social security number or your date of birth. (DO NOT GIVE IT TO THEM, ASK THEM FOR WHAT THEY HAVE ON RECORD!)

5: If they repeatedly insist that you will be arrested if you do not pay right away.

If the call sounds suspicious you can verify if its an official call by contacting an **IRS Taxpayer Advocate** at **804-916-3501** or toll free at **1-877-777-4778.**

Vacation Safety

With Spring Break right around the corner, many of us may be looking for a warmer climate to spend the week. Here are a few preplanning tips to help you and your family stay safe.

- Take a close look at the hotel you may be staying at during your vacation. Check with local law enforcement about the neighborhood and the hotel.
- If you are renting a condo, be sure to check on crime stats for the neighborhood. Check to see if the neighborhood has changed since you were there last.
- Check local crime stats for any unusual activity or recent crime trends that you and your family should be aware of.
- Keep in mind that criminals will often target tourists. Be mindful of your surroundings, especially at night.
- Utilize in hotel safes and lockboxes. Your valuables can be easily removed while housekeeping or other cleaning services are cleaning the rooms.
- If you travel abroad be sure to make copies of all of your required documents. IE: Passport, Travel Vouchers, Airline Tickets, Travelers Checks, US Identification Cards. Keep this copy in a safe location in case the originals are stolen.
- Be sure to check in with the US Embassy to let them know where you are staying so they can contact you in case of an emergency.
- Check the Department of State website for any security warnings about countries you may be visiting.
- Have a plan if you have to leave in a hurry. Know how to get to the embassy, airport, train station, or port on your own. Buy or download an English language map of the area you will be visiting.
- Keep a small amount of local currency and US currency on hand in case of an emergency.
- Study up on local customs and rules so you keep yourself and family out of trouble.

Remember having a plan and being prepared are the first steps in being safe no matter where you are.

FAQ's

Q: Where can I find a list of upcoming crime prevention classes that are being taught by the Sheriff's Office?

A: On the Sheriff's Office website, **sheriff.loudoun.gov** you can find info on the calendar link in the lower left corner. This will give you a date, time and location for all currently scheduled classes that are open to the public.

Q: Is the Sheriff's Office still teaching the Internet Safety: What Parents Need to Know class?

A: Yes, We are currently working to schedule these classes. If you check our upcoming events calendar you can see when and where these classes are being held. If you are interested in hosting a class for an organization or civic group you may email Major Don Park at Don.Park@Loudoun.gov.

Q: Is there a County Ordinance regarding when someone has to take down Christmas Decorations?

A: There are no county or state ordinances that pertain to when Christmas Decorations have to be taken down. However, many HOA's have regulations that pertain to holiday decorations.

Feel free to send your questions to:

DFC James Spurlock at
james.spurlock@loudoun.gov

If you would like to invite Sheriff Mike Chapman to an HOA or Neighborhood Watch meeting feel free to contact Kraig Troxell, Public Information Officer, at Kraig.Troxell@loudoun.gov or by calling 703-771-5278.