

COMMUNITY ALERT

Provided by: Tucker Crime Prevention Unit of the DeKalb Police Department

SAFETY INFORMATION and EVENT NOTIFICATION

MAIL/PACKAGE and IDENTITY THEFT

Mail theft is one of the easiest ways for criminals to obtain your identity. Although mail theft can occur at any time, certain times of the year are more prone to this type of activity. Spring brings Income Tax Refund checks; Summer provides more opportunity for theft as residents are away from home more often and for longer periods of time; and the holiday season at year's end combines long periods of time away from home with holiday cards that may contain money, checks, or gift cards, and/or packages delivered to your residence, during your absence.

Proactive measures:

- * Use direct deposit whenever possible to eliminate checks in your mailbox.
 - * Have your personal checks sent to your bank and pick them up there.
 - * Look into the attributes of a locked mailbox.
 - * If you are frequently away from home, consider renting a post office box.
 - * If you stop your mail while on vacation, or while away from your residence for an extended period, ask a neighbor to pick up any mail that was delivered in error.
 - * If you are expecting a package delivery while you are away from home, ask a trusted friend to take possession of it, and hold it for safekeeping.
- NOTE: Inform your neighbors of this action, so they won't call police to report a theft.
- * When at home, determine what time your mail arrives, and then retrieve it from your mailbox as soon as possible.
 - * If you are away from home and can not accept possession of a package, have your package sent to another location, where someone else can assume possession of it. If it is permissible, have your package delivered to your workplace. However, if your only option is to have packages delivered to your home, during your absence, specify in the delivery instructions that the package needs to be placed in an area where it is *not highly visible from the street*.
 - * Don't hesitate to call 911 when you see suspicious persons, vehicles, or behavior.

Thieves are interested in obtaining your credit card statements, pre-approved credit card offers, Social Security checks, Income Tax Refund checks, birthday cards, etc. either for the *cash* or the *information* contained within that can be used for their gain or for Identity Theft.

MILD WEATHER SCAMS

Warm weather tends to bring out more con and scam artists, panhandlers, vagrants, solicitors, and gypsy vendors. Citizens are more likely to encounter these persons in their neighborhoods, shopping centers, and parking lots. One common scam is to approach residents in their yards or driveways, or even to knock on the door, where the scammer then provides the resident a hard luck story, or asks to use their phone or their bathroom. Sometimes they present themselves as a neighbor to ensure that the resident will allow them to enter their residence. Keep in mind these people are strangers and it may not be in your best interests to permit them to enter your home. Know your neighbors, so you can make a valid assessment as to whether the person at your door is a neighbor or not. Volunteering to be a N/W Block Captain or getting involved in community activities will provide more opportunities to know who resides in your neighborhood.

Proactive measures:

- * If a stranger knocks on your door and asks to use your phone, inform them that you will gladly place a call to 911 or to another local number for them, while they wait outside.
- * If the visitor claims to be a neighbor, ask them for the neighborhood code. If you have one great, if not, this should confuse them and send them on their way.
- * Soliciting in the roadway is not permitted in DeKalb County. This applies to selling the Sunday paper and collecting donations for various organizations. This creates a road hazard and is unsafe.
- * Temporary Vendors- These are vendors who set up temporary "storefronts" in parking lots. Some of the merchandise they sell has been linked to stolen goods obtained through cargo theft. Besides the possibility of purchasing stolen goods, it also encourages the sellers to remain in your community.
- * Irish Travelers – They emerge in the spring and are into roofing, driveway paving, home improvement, and pressure washing scams. They try to charm you into a great deal, which usually involves your money up front to cover the cost of materials. If they show up at all, after pocketing your money, they will perform inadequate or incomplete work.

If you do permit a stranger entry into your home, keep them confined to a limited area where you can observe their actions. This advice applies to service people (contractors, landscapers, maid service, heating/air conditioning, air vent cleaning, plumbers, etc. that you hire to work in your home or on your property. Although most service people are *reputable*, there are some that may have a secondary purpose in mind. Don't provide them with the opportunity to help themselves to your valuable jewelry, cash, or other valuables by leaving them in plain sight. Try to hire people you know, ones recommended by trusted acquaintances, or that have Better Business Bureau approval. Also, be careful not to provide any inadvertent verbal information regarding your upcoming absence from your residence, an expected tax refund check, or the future purchase of valuables such as a flat screen T.V, a new laptop computer, or fine jewelry, etc.

Police and communities working together, as a team, will create safer communities. Although the police never want the public to put themselves in harm's way, providing **information regarding crimes in progress or suspicious persons or vehicles, combined with detailed suspect descriptions** can be extremely helpful in identifying and apprehending crime suspects. By reporting suspect descriptions to 911, officers will have a valid reason to stop persons, fitting that description, and question them, even if it is outside of the area where the initial *incident or suspicion* occurred. This is a valuable resource for you to help reduce crime in your communities. Another resource the public has to deter crime is to report possible **Truancy** (school age children not in school when it is in session) and **Curfew** (children 16 and under out from midnight- 5:00A.M) violations.

DISTRACTION THEFT/PICKPOCKETS

Some of you may have seen on the local news last week where a man lost his wallet to a pick pocket. This form of distraction theft involved 2 persons, one who "bumped" into the victim and the other who stole the victim's wallet. According to Sgt. Kenney, Tucker CID, this type of theft has occurred recently in supermarkets on Wednesdays, which is senior discount day. You should always be vigilant regarding your purse or wallet while shopping. Women should not leave their purses unattended and men, who keep their wallets in their back pockets, need to check to see if their wallets remain there. To help deter theft, a fanny pack worn in the front can be substituted to hold valuables, or a money clip placed in a front pocket provides safer alternatives. Anytime you are accidentally bumped or a person tries to distract in some manner while you are shopping, you need to check to see if your purse or wallet is still intact.

UPCOMING EVENT

ELECTRONICS RECYCLING EVENT

Keep DeKalb Beautiful is offering residents the opportunity to recycle electronic equipment. This recycling event will be held on **Saturday, March 7, 2009 from 9:00A-1:00P**. The drop off location is the **Wal-Mart Supercenter, 3580 Memorial Dr., Decatur, Ga. 30032**. The list of accepted and non-accepted items is too long to list, but you can obtain more information by calling 404.371.2654.

Please distribute this information to all of your residents.

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