

COMMUNITY NEWS

Provided by: Tucker Crime Prevention Specialist -- DeKalb Police Department

SAFETY INFORMATION and EVENTS

SCAM ALERT

I addressed this issue last month, but decided to cover it again as I have heard from several communities who have encountered this situation. A resident has been approached by a *stranger*, who although he claims to be your neighbor, needs to use *your* phone to call a tow truck, for his wife, who he claims was involved in a motor vehicle accident. Next, he will ask for money from you to pay for the towing cost. **THIS IS A SCAM!** The feedback that I have received from various potential victims informed me that no money changed hands and that the *stranger* was not permitted entry into the residence to use the phone. I am happy to hear that residents are using good judgment by not buying into this scam. Remember, these con artists *appeal to your emotions* and they are *very good at presenting a sob or hard luck story* to get you to part with your money. Don't become a victim of these scammers ... know your neighbors, use a neighborhood code/password and do not permit strangers into your home. It's your home, so you need to be in control of the situation. You can relinquish control when you allow strangers into your home and access to your possessions.

I have also heard of variations of this scam occurring in parking lots. If someone asks you for help in the form of money or a ride, offer to call 911 for them. If a person is truly in need of help, they will be grateful for your assistance, while the scammers will probably move on when you suggest this.

ROBBERY PREVENTION

Scenario: You return home and find your entry door ajar or a window broken. You promptly use your cell phone to call 911, from *outside your home*, and are likely to say to the 911 operator, "I've been robbed". When the police arrive and you determine that property is missing, the incident report will classify this activity as a *burglary*, not a robbery. Burglary is theft of property, Robbery is theft from person.

There are 3 types of robberies:

1. **Commercial Robbery-** A person(s) demands cash or valuables from a business or banking establishment.
2. **Residential Robbery-** A person(s) enters your home and demands cash or valuables from a person or persons inside the residence.
3. **Pedestrian Robbery-** A person(s) demands cash or valuables from a pedestrian.

Most of you should not be a victim of a Commercial or Residential Robbery. If you work in a profession where you handle money (cashier, manager, bank employee, taxi driver, fast food counter person, delivery person, etc.) your possibilities of being a *Commercial Robbery* victim could increase slightly. As for *Residential Robbery*, more commonly referred to as *Home Invasion* (a media term), MOST of these robberies involve persons who know each other and are USUALLY drug related. So, the odds are on your side that you won't become a target for these two types of robberies. However, Pedestrian Robbery provides the greatest chance of you becoming a robbery victim. These robberies include *muggings* and *purse snatches*. The most common places where these robberies occur are in parking lots, while walking or jogging *alone*, hiking/bicycle trails, or parks.

Proactive measures:

- * **Safety in numbers**- Invite a friend or neighbor to jog/hike/walk with you. If you are alone in a parking lot, try to walk near others, so it will appear that you are part of a group. This should make you less likely to be a mugging or purse snatch victim.
- * **Don't carry a lot of cash**- Some cultures tend to carry a substantial amount of cash on their person. This makes them more vulnerable for a robbery attempt.
- * **Purses**- Ladies who carry purses, while walking through parking lots, need to hold onto their purses, not just the strap. Straps can be cut or purses can be pulled off their owner's arm while they are walking. If your purse has a shoulder strap, never put it across your body. If someone is determined to take it, you can get hurt or even dragged in the process. It is better to put it over your shoulder, keep it close to your body, and hold on to the purse, not the strap.
- * **Dogs**- A four-legged pal, who accompanies you on your walk/jog/hike, may deter a robbery attempt.
- * **Jewelry**- Don't wear your precious jewelry while walking, jogging, or hiking.
- * **Cell Phone**- A cell phone is good resource to have to summon help. However, if you are talking on it, this can distract you from someone who is approaching you from behind. Also, cell phones are "hot" theft items.
- * **I-Pods**- Similar to cell phones, as they are also distracting, limit you from hearing someone's approach, and are "hot" theft items.
- * **Stay Alert**- Keep your mind totally focused on what is *ahead, behind, and on both sides of you*.
- * **Garage**- Don't sit in your car with your garage door open. I know of several incidents where the home owner was approached while in their garage and relieved of their valuables.
- * **Carjacking**- Another media term, this is actually 2 crimes...Robbery and Auto Theft. Be alert to approaching strangers when you when you are stopped at a traffic light, or filling your gas tank.

CRAIGSLIST – From September 1, 2008-March 11, 2009, there have been 12 pedestrian robberies in the county in which the victim made contact with the suspect via Craigslist (website used to buy and sell products and services). None of these incidents have occurred within Tucker Precinct. Unfortunately, the suspects used Craigslist as an opportunity to target victims; so use caution when conducting business with someone online. Good news: **Three arrests**.

NOTE: The information regarding walkers, joggers, and hikers apply not only to Pedestrian Robberies, but to Assaults as well. Some additional safety tips include bringing a whistle and/or a personal safety alarm with you to alert someone that you are hurt or need assistance. You can only yell for help for a limited amount of time, but you can continue to blow a whistle longer. Also, carry some I.D. with you and include medical information (blood type, medical conditions, allergies, etc.), in the event you are unable to verbally provide this information to a first responder.

