

GENERAL HOME WATCH ADVICE

Contacting the Police

You should commit the following two numbers to memory:

For emergency calls and you require urgent police assistance call 999

For all non-emergency calls including calls made some time after an event, or when you are unsure about an incident that had occurred or if you wish to call a particular officer or police station call 0845 456 4567.

Everyone is responsible to report a crime - do not expect the Co-ordinator to do it but tell your Co-ordinator afterwards so they can keep others aware. The police are always keen to hear from the public and only they will know how important your call is after you have made it so don't be worried that your call might be wasting their time.

Your small piece of information might just be the last piece of the puzzle they have been waiting for. On the other hand, the recipient of your call might not be having a good day and if you feel you have not been given the response and urgency you were expecting please write to the Chief Constable and COMPLAIN. That is the only way people with the power to make changes are made aware of problems.

Burglaries

Most burglaries occur during the day but 1/3 are committed between midnight and 6am. The most common method to gain entry is by forcing a rear door or window but sadly, as last year, there are still too many crimes where the premises were insecure with doors and window left open. There continues to be concern over the frequent occurrences of bogus caller offences and rogue traders targeting the most vulnerable and we must continue to keep a wary eye out for those that are perpetrating these crimes and those that are most affected. This year we have had people purporting to be police officers, council officers and water company officials and children tricking the elderly.

The most 'popular' article to be stolen is jewellery followed by cash, credit cards and of course your identity. Also, thieves have taken audio/video and computer equipment from sheds and from garages stolen articles include machinery plant, power and hand tools, garden achinery, motorcycles and pedal cycles. Although vehicle crime is within the target set it is disappointing to see every day that someone has left valuables inside on view or left a vehicle unlocked or both, sometimes overnight and sometimes in a dark unlit secluded parking area.

The most recent popular article to be taken from vehicles is the satellite navigation system. These are becoming more and more common and thieves are aware that even if you remove the system a 'ring' mark is left on the windscreen by the rubber suction pad and that is their clue to break into the car in the hope that the system has been left in the glove compartment.

Lastly, it is very disappointing to see so many people showing total disregard for the security of pedal cycles. Leaving cycles unlocked, sometimes leaning against shop fronts, home sheds and garages and lying in the garden is manna to thieves.

Property Marking

Throughout the year I remind everyone about the benefits of property marking using a simple UV pen marking kit. Property security marking really does deter the thief but as jewellery and small valuables are the most likely items to be stolen from a home how can you mark these items and not affect their value? The 'simplest' way to record valuables and jewellery is to take digital photographs of the items and store the

photographs on a CD to be held by a trusted friend or neighbour. If you hold the CD at home and you are burgled you don't want to give the thief a record of all your valuables that were not stolen on their last visit to your home!! The good news is there are ways of marking jewellery, antiques and other valuables and it is done through a respected professional company called Selectamark. It is possible to buy systems such as 'Microdot' with your specific reference code (about £30 for 1000 dots) or by using a DNA system where you brush on a 'liquid' containing a DNA reference code with a paint brush (about £75 for marking 50 items).

I commend you to contact Selectamark for full information about their systems at Selectamark Security Systems plc, 1 Locks Court, 429 Crofton Road, Locksbottom, Kent BR6 8NL – 01689 860757 or email sales@selectamark.co.uk. Their website is www.selectamark.co.uk

In all cases where you security mark your property you must advertise the fact; otherwise thieves will not be deterred. Don't listen to those that say "if you advertise that you have valuables it will encourage thieves to break-in". The majority of thieves believe that everyone not sleeping in a cardboard box is assumed to have items of value and will assess whether to break-in by the amount of security on the building, the security awareness of the owner of the property and the opportunity available.

National Property Register

There is a National Register where you can register your property and if it is lost or stolen and later recovered by the police it can be quickly returned to you. Visit their website for more information: www.immobilise.com or email them at info@immobilise.com

Bikes

Selectamark have recently updated their Bikeregister website www.bikeregister.com and I commend every cycle owner to not only security mark their cycle and keep it locked when left unattended, but also to consider using the Bikeregister.

SCAMs

People who carry out scams are Scheming, Crafty, Aggressive and Malicious. It is almost impossible to keep up with the latest scam because as soon as one scam is found and negated the criminal invents another. They come to you in the form of a letter, telephone call, email and the cold caller. If you think an offer is too good to be true or this is just too good to miss, think again, never commit yourself without first talking it over with friends, family or an independent expert. It seems that most scam 'once - in - a lifetime' offers or notices of a 'competition' win comes from Canada or Africa but don't rule out anywhere else!

Some companies particularly one called PDF which purports to be a delivery company will send you a card saying you have a parcel requiring you to call and arrange delivery. The telephone number will start with a 09 which means you will pay on a premium line. You will hear an answer machine and you will receive a bill but no parcel. The latest and probably the most serious scam is identity theft and many lives have been totally ruined by a criminal getting their hands on a small but vital piece of personal information. Recently a thief in Wymondham emptied a wheelie bin in the hope of retrieving information which might enable them to steal an identity. The following are steps you can take to go a long way in protecting yourself against identity theft:

- Don't give personal details, especially financial details, over the phone or on email unless you are certain you know to whom you are contacting.

- Always destroy unwanted mail by using a shredder – they are normally less than £25 but could save you thousands.
- Always cover the PIN numbers with your other hand when using a cash machine and never use the machine if someone is standing too close to you. Never accept help from a member of the public if there appears to be a problem with the machine.
- Call the bank or the police if you are suspicious of the machine; never get into a discussion with someone who seems suspicious- these criminals can be particularly nasty.

For more information about scams if you have access to the internet look at the Office for Fair Trading web-site at www.oft.gov.uk or call them on 0845 7224499.