



West Bend Police Department Neighborhood Watch News

December · 2010

Welcome to the West Bend Police Department's Neighborhood Watch newsletter. I hope you find it informative! We have been working diligently to update the Neighborhood Watch rosters and newsletter. If there is a topic you would like to see in an upcoming newsletter, please feel free to contact me. My e-mail address and telephone number are listed below.

- Officer Gail Trapp · Crime Prevention/Community Relations Officer

Theft From Vehicles

Theft from vehicles is one of West Bend's most persistent problems and has been on an increase in the past months. It involves the theft of valuables from a vehicle and often occurs in business parking lots, as well as driveways or streets. Thieves will often break windows or punch locks to gain entry, but will also enter unlocked vehicles that contain valuables in plain view. Some common targets are stereos, laptops, compact



discs, GPS units, and purses or wallets. The actors in these thefts from vehicles are looking for quick and easy targets. If your doors are locked and they do not see anything of value through the windows, your vehicle will most likely be left alone. If your vehicle is locked but the actor can see a valuable item through the window, they may break in. Most of these events are taking place during the hours of darkness. If you can, try to remember to look outside your windows before going to bed. If you hear something during the night, look outside. If something looks suspicious or you are observing a vehicle break in, do not confront the suspect(s), call the Police Department (9-1-1). Provide us with as much information as possible, and be a good witness.

Prevention Tips:

- **Lock the doors to your vehicle.**
- **If you have valuables in your vehicle, lock them in the trunk.**
- **Do not leave traces of valuables that might be in your vehicle such as GPS docking stations or phones chargers.**
- **Try to park in well-lit areas.**
- **Do not leave valuables in plain sight within your vehicle.**
- **Do not leave items that may seem of value to others such as backpacks, gym bags or briefcases.**

If you have any information on these crimes, contact the West Bend Police Department at (262)335-5000. Remember, you know your neighborhood best.



West Bend Police - Dispatch
Emergency: 911
Non-Emergency: (262)335-5000
dispatch@ci.west-bend.wi.us

**Crime Prevention/
Community Relations**
(262)335-5022
pdcrime@ci.west-bend.wi.us



Holiday Shopping Tips

During the holidays, people are often very busy and tend to be somewhat careless. Unfortunately, it's a peak season for pickpockets, purse-snatchers, shoplifters, and con-artists. Here are some things to consider to make the holidays a safe and happy time:

- Shop before dark, if possible. Coordinate shopping trips with a friend if you plan to be out late. Never park in an unlit lot, no matter how convenient it is.
- Lock your car and close your windows even if you're only planning to be gone a few minutes. **Lock packages in the trunk.**
- Park near streetlights, and have your keys in hand when you return to the car. Check the interior of your car before getting inside.
- To discourage purse-snatchers, don't over-burden yourself with packages.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash. Pay for purchases with a check or credit card when possible. Don't carry excess credit cards. Take only those cards for the stores where you intend to shop. Make sure you have recorded all your credit cards and keep this information in a safe place at home.
- Be extra careful with purses and wallets. Carry your purse under your arm. Keep your wallet in an inside jacket pocket or front pants pocket.
- Teach your children to go to a store clerk or security guard and ask for help if you become separated in a store or shopping mall. Children should never go into the parking lot alone.



New Bike for the Holidays? If you will be purchasing a new bicycle for the holidays, don't forget to get it registered/licensed as soon as possible. This way the serial number will be recorded with your local police department.

Window Shopping? What gifts are showing from your windows? Don't make it easy for burglars to "window shop". Don't display gifts where they can be seen from a window or door. Store gifts before you go away on a holiday trip.

Advertising Your Trash? Are you advertising what's new at your house by the boxes they came in? Cut microwave, television, and stereo boxes into smaller pieces and place inside your recycling containers.

Scam Alerts: Mortgage Rescue Fraud

You're having trouble paying your mortgage bill. The possibility of foreclosure is weighing heavily on your mind. Sitting at your computer, you think all hope is lost until you come across an email that reads: "Get the professional help you need to keep your home and have peace of mind. What if I told you that we have plenty of lenders who can lower your rate so drastically that when all is said and done, you wind up paying only 1/3 of what you're used to paying!" What do you do? Some individuals see this as the perfect opportunity to solve all of their problems. Instead, they fall victim to mortgage rescue scams. Mortgage modification and rescue scams are still on the rise. Typically, these scams take place via emails and phone calls. They all promise the same thing: modifying mortgage rates, rescue from foreclosure, help in stopping bankruptcy or just help getting your home sold.

Scammers claim they can do wonders for any mortgage problem, but of course, they charge a fee up front. They say they will talk to lenders for you as well. But once the fee is paid, everything changes. Some scammers have victims sign what they think are new loan papers. Instead, they are documents that sign over the ownership of the property. Others have you simply surrender your home in order to help sell it faster. Most, though, are simply after the money.

As with most scams, there are dire consequences associated with falling for any type of mortgage scheme. Victims will be asked to give personal and tax information which provides scammers with the ammunition they need to commit identity theft. If the scammers do talk to lenders, they will most likely misrepresent the victim, causing more harm than good. Some victims will be led to believe that everything is going smoothly until they start receiving default notices in the mail for missing their required monthly payments. Communication stops and scammers suddenly become inaccessible.

Data from the Internet Complaint Search and Investigation System (ICSIS): There were 241 mortgage-related complaints from January 1, 2009 to February 26, 2010. One case alone generated 18 complaints and losses totaling \$93,075. For more information on avoiding scams, you can check a website: www.ic3.gov and click on Internet Crime Prevention Tips or Internet Crime Schemes.