

Distraction Burglary Update

Dear all

(Please can I ask that if you live next to, or near, an elderly or vulnerable person, that you print this email out and post it through their door and in addition, if you see them, encourage them to join NHW? We have several NHW members who don't have email but their relatives / friends who they talk to regularly do so we send the emails to them to ensure the resident gets time critical information. Thank you. They can call the Safer Neighbourhood Team on 020 7161 8115 for more information.)

There has been some good news and bad news about burglaries recently.

The bad news is that today there was a distraction burglary in Canbury Avenue. Distraction burglary works where the occupant is 'distracted' by person A whilst person B burgles the house. This incident was where the owner went to the front door to talk to person A whilst person B went in through the back door. PLEASE lock all doors and pull large windows to if you're going to answer the front door. Distraction burglary can also work whereby person A claims there is an emergency on the road / medical etc etc.

PLEASE be aware of who else is in your street as you walk to work, pop home early from that meeting, visit a friend, school run etc. A smile to the stranger in your road may be all it takes to make the stranger realise that this is a vigilant area with heightened awareness and if the stranger is up to no good it might be all it takes for them to move on to less vigilant areas.

There is some good advice which I've copied below which is taken from the Warwickshire Police website:

And more can be found here on Crimestoppers website: <http://www.crimestoppers-uk.org/crime-prevention/helping-prevent-crime/distraction-burglary/more-distraction-burglary-crime-prevention-advice>

HOW TO AVOID DISTRACTION BURGLARIES

DOORSTEP CODE FOR UNINVITED CALLS

CRIME PREVENTION ADVICE - DISTRACTION BURGLARIES

Warwickshire Police would like to remind householders to always use the Doorstep Code for uninvited callers. The below advice will help to protect you and vulnerable members of your family from distraction burglars.

Doorstep code

When someone comes to your door, follow these simple steps - this advice could stop you from letting a bogus caller into your home.

Keep the door locked

Look out of the window or use the spy hole if you have one, to see if you can identify who the caller is. If there is more than one person be suspicious - it is unusual for a company to send more than one person. Is the caller wearing a uniform?

Is there a company car outside?

Make sure your back door is closed and locked before answering your front door - thieves have been known to work in pairs, with one entering through the back while the other knocks on the front door.

Go to the door; make sure the safety chain is on before you open it. Always keep the chain on whilst talking to the person.

Does the caller know your name?

Ask the caller who they are and where they are from

Ask to see some form of identification, even if they have a prearranged appointment.

Does the card look like an official company card? o Is there a photograph? - Does it match with the caller?

Does the card carry the company name?

If you are unsure close the door, look up the company name in the phone book (or call direct enquiries) and ring them. Get the company to verify the caller's identity. Do not ring the number on the card given to you, as an accomplice could answer the call.

Look at a recent bill to check the phone number. You should also think about keeping a list of useful phone numbers, like gas, electricity and water services, in a handy place. Many now have free phone numbers to help you check the identity of their workers.

If you are still not reassured don't re-open the door and call the police on 999.

If you still feel vulnerable tell the caller you want to make an appointment for them to call back at a more convenient time when you can have a friend or relative

present. You can also ask them to contact you by letter to re-arrange. Genuine callers will understand and be happy to comply with these requests. Remember genuine callers will normally make an appointment first and always carry photo identification.

The gas, water and electricity companies, and some councils, now have a password system for older and vulnerable customers. Customers give the company a word that is confidential to them and the company. When their representative calls, they will be expected to tell the customer the password to prove they are genuine. Passwords are invaluable if you live in a flat and initially need to give callers access to a communal entrance. They are also useful when granting carers access to your home.

If you are not expecting anyone and they have not shown you an identity card, do not let them in until you have checked and double-checked that the caller is genuine.

You do not have to let a stranger into your home - even if they claim it is an emergency.

If you think a bogus caller has called at your door, report it to the police immediately - dial 999 and tell them what has happened. Try to give the police a

description of the person. Whilst they are on their way, tell a neighbour just in case they try at other homes in the area. The earlier the police know that bogus

callers are working in the area, the quicker they can investigate. If you have information about bogus callers, phone CRIMESTOPPERS on 0800 555 111 -Your call is free and you will not be asked for your name.

*Remember though, most callers to your home will be genuine, **if you have any doubt, keep them out.***

The GOOD news about burglary is that...

On Christmas Eve 2011 another house on Canbury Avenue! was burgled. The burglar entered through the first floor window and took a number of electrical goods (Merry Christmas.) Last week the victim was visited by the Police. They recently caught the burglar red handed (and a very Happy New Year!) and on searching his premises found property that could be traced to the house on Canbury Avenue as it was identified by the SERIAL NUMBERS which the victim had kept copies of prior to the burglary. So the advice here - **MAKE SURE YOU WRITE DOWN YOUR SERIAL NUMBERS AND KEEP THEM IN A SAFE PLACE** (Personally I'd also email them to myself as I can access my email from any computer i.e. not stored on my computer which may be stolen as well.....) **OR GET THEM 'MARKED' WITH A SPECIAL KIT.** But this was VERY good news. The burglars from another burglary that happened around that same time have also been caught. They were from South America and could be placed at the scene of the crime as well.

And finally - some more crime prevention advice - this time from the Metropolitan Police regarding a telephone scam that targets the elderly and vulnerable....the poster in particular, which is attached, is very clear.

Message from the Metropolitan Police

Dear all,

A particular type of fraud targeting elderly people is on the increase across London. Our aim is to raise awareness and provide some key crime prevention messages to the elderly and their circle of support - friends, family, neighbours etc.

By raising awareness we will decrease the likelihood of people falling victim.

The average age of the victim is 70 years old. The average loss is £4,000.

The Method

1. The method varies but essentially involves a victim being telephoned (cold-called) by a suspect who alleges to be someone of authority (eg, from the police, bank, Serious Fraud Office). The suspect tells the victim there is a problem with their bank account (like it has been compromised) and that their bank card must be collected.

2. If the victim is unconvinced that the call is genuine they are instructed to hang up and call a genuine number – such as 999 or the telephone number on the rear of their bank card. However, the suspect keeps the telephone line open and so the call goes straight back to the fraudster who then deals with any subsequent call, convincing the victim of their authenticity.
3. The victim is then content to reveal their bank details, namely the PIN.
4. An often unwitting courier or taxi driver is sent to collect the victim's card. The card is delivered to a second suspect, who then passes it on to the fraudster. The fraudster then empties the bank account.

Key Messages

Primary: (To potential victims, family, friends) Never give anyone your PIN or bank card – the police and banks will never ask for them.

Secondary/supporting message(s): (To cabbies/couriers) Beware of collecting and delivering packages from elderly people as you may be assisting in a criminal offence.

Reporting offences: If you have been a victim call the police on 101 or in an emergency by dialling 999. (Generally victims are elderly/vulnerable and therefore it is NOT appropriate to report this matter to Action Fraud).

A courier fraud awareness day is being held on Wednesday 20th March.

If you are part of a neighbourhood watch group please consider meeting on 20th March (or any time that week) in order to focus on this issue and give out the above messages.

The Metropolitan Police has produced a crime prevention poster which is currently being distributed throughout London. Please see attachment.