

SAINT LOUIS COUNTY POLICE

Neighborhood Watch Letter

July 2009

Wildwood Precinct

17014 New College Avenue
Wildwood, MO 63040
(636) 458-9194

Highlights:

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Pool Safety
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Neighborhood Watch Meeting

Our next Neighborhood Watch Coordinator's Meeting will be on **Thursday, August 27, 2009 at 7:00PM at the Wildwood Precinct Station**. A detective from our Burglary Unit will be present to give a short presentation and to answer any questions you may have regarding his role and responsibilities. We will also be discussing recent crime trends and addressing any concerns you may have in your neighborhoods.

National Night Out

The St. Louis County Police Department – Wildwood Precinct would like to announce that **National Night Out is on Tuesday, August 4, 2009**. Millions of Americans across the country will join together in support of crime and drug prevention programs.

One of the most important reasons for National Night Out is to send a clear message to would-be criminals that law-abiding citizens and police are united in their efforts to reduce crime.

A National Night Out event will be held in the Lake Chesterfield subdivision beginning at 7:00PM. Child safety seat checks and a bicycle safety course will be conducted as well as numerous other activities. Refreshments will also be available. This event has been designed to generate participation in anti-crime efforts and strengthen the communication between police and the citizens we serve. All citizens are encouraged to attend.

If you would like to schedule a National Night Out event in your neighborhood, please contact Officers Robert Wolff or Brad Wood at the Wildwood Precinct station (636) 458-9194.

Car/Garage Hopping

A growing crime among teenagers that involves entering unlocked vehicles or garages and stealing valuables is termed, "car/garage hopping". Prevention of these thefts many times is quite simple. Because frequently the property being stolen is in plain view in a vehicle that is unlocked or in a garage in which the door has been left open, by locking the vehicle or closing the garage door, a theft will not occur. What used to be just crimes of opportunity are now planned crimes. It is a simple matter of attraction. Valuable property that is easily stolen is attractive to a thief. Removing the attraction will stop the crime. The following is a short piece that was seen on a teenage blog in reference to car/garage hopping:

- *Walk down streets near your house and approach cars that are parked in the street or in a driveway. Casually check the doors to see if they are unlocked. If you are lucky enough to find an unlocked car, go through it looking for money, I-Pods, cell phones, stereos, wallets, purses, gift cards (you get the idea). Take the loot and quietly shut the car door then move to the next vehicle. Happy hunting!*

Police officers of the Wildwood Precinct ask residents seeing suspicious activity, particularly at night, to call the police. They ask that residents be especially aware of small groups of teenagers wandering or driving through neighborhoods checking cars.

All-Terrain Vehicles

Several questions have been brought to the attention of officers in the Wildwood Precinct concerning the use of All Terrain Vehicles (ATV's) in the City of Wildwood, especially on roadways that are privately maintained. Except for very limited circumstances, the operation of an ATV upon a roadway or highway in the City of Wildwood is prohibited. This restriction applies to both adults and children.

Some have argued that privately maintained roadways are private drives, and therefore, not subject to the same traffic laws as publicly maintained streets for vehicles like ATV's. However, roadways that are privately maintained, but which have public access, fall under the definition of a roadway or highway regarding traffic laws.

In addition, there are other issues and questions related to ATV's that officers regularly receive.

- Any operator of an ATV under the age of 18 must wear a securely fastened helmet and can only have a passenger if the ATV was designed to carry more than one person.
- Generally, ATV's can only be operated on private property with the consent of the property owner.
- If the ATV is being operated on the property of another, and the operator is under the age of 16, a parent or guardian must be present at the time the ATV is being operated.
- Also, it is a violation to operate an ATV in a careless manner, which endangers anyone or any property or to operate an ATV while intoxicated. These conditions apply even if operated while on private property.

ATV's may have practical and useful applications, but should be operated in a manner which is safe and consistent with the laws of the City of Wildwood.

Garage Sale Safety

If you are planning a garage sale, here are a few good tips to help you avoid financial or physical harm to yourself, your family, and your property.

1. When planning a garage sale, consider inviting or joining with other neighbors and have a subdivision garage sale.
2. Avoid conducting the garage sale alone. Make it a family affair. Assign family members to certain tasks, i.e., one in charge of and guarding the cash box; another assisting the customer; another observing and making sure no one strays into areas of your property that are "off limits" to the public.
3. Make sure your garage is clearly marked and directs people to stay within a designated area of the garage. Separate items or areas that are not part of the garage sale.
4. Have a wireless or cell phone near you in the garage. This will prevent you from running into the house to answer the phone. If asked by a customer to use your phone inside your house, do not allow it. If it's a real emergency, place the call for them.
5. Do not allow a customer to use your bathroom. It is not a good idea to give a stranger access to your home.
6. Make sure you lock all your doors (even from the garage into your home) and windows.
7. Do not leave the cash-box unattended. Periodically take large bills into a safe place inside your home and avoid displaying large bills.
8. Do NOT accept personal checks. Tell the customer that you will hold the item while he/she goes to the bank and gets the cash.
9. Report any person that looks suspicious.
10. Take everything back into the garage after each day of sales. Do not leave anything outside.

Rock Hollow Trail

Construction of the Rock Hollow Trail began on June 26, 2009. During the next several months, while this multiple-use trail is constructed, the area will be closed at all times. The *Rock Hollow Trail* is a 3-mile corridor that terminates on the north at Ridge Road, near Ridge Meadows Elementary School, and on the south at the Al Foster Memorial Trail (*near the 1-mile marker from the Al Foster Memorial Trailhead in Glencoe*). Prior to construction, the City was allowing bicyclists/hikers to utilize the corridor during daylight hours. Due to the dangers during construction, only construction personnel will now be allowed on site. The City apologizes for any inconvenience this may cause and welcomes you to utilize the trail once it is completed. The estimated time of completion will be in the Fall of 2009.

Pool Safety

Summer is here and many people will be headed to the pool – including children that might not know about water safety. Hundreds of children under the age of 5 (five) drown each year in residential pools. It is a parent's and caregiver's responsibility to do all they can to ensure a child's safety and teach them how to protect themselves. If you use a pool, please follow these safety tips:

- Never leave your child unattended for any reason.
- Don't rely on swimming lessons or flotation devices to protect your children.
- Fence in the pool completely and install self-closing, self-latching gates.
- Post all pool rules such as "No Swimming Alone" and "No Running".
- Keep a shepherd's hook, first-aid kit and life preserver by the pool.
- Never swim in a pool with its cover partially in place.
- Place alarms on doors and windows leading to the pool (*at least five feet high so children cannot reach them*). Secure and lock all doors and windows when not in use.
- Have some type of telephone near the pool (*wireless or cellular*).
- The above rules should also apply to spas and hot tubs.

Remember, drowning is a silent event. Children do not understand the danger of water and often fail to splash or cry for help.

On-Line Auction Fraud (*National Crime Prevention Council*)

Millions of people take part in internet auctions every day, bidding on items from around the world. Buyers and sellers alike benefit from the great opportunities that online auctions provide, but these auctions also give criminals the opportunity to perpetrate fraud. Both consumers and merchants can be victims of online fraud. Here are some ways that fraud occurs during or after an online auction.

Failure to Deliver Goods

The seller places an item up for bidding that does not exist or fails to deliver merchandise after the consumer buys it.

Nonpayment of Delivered Goods

The seller sends the merchandise to the highest bidder in good faith but fails to receive payment.

Misrepresentation of Merchandise

The seller gives false information about the item, or attempts to deceive the buyer concerning its true value.

Hidden Charges

Instead of a flat rate for postage and handling, the seller adds separate charges for postage, handling, and the shipping container, causing the buyer to pay more than anticipated.

Fake Bidding

The seller bids on his/her own item or has someone else bid, in an attempt to drive up the price.

Credit Card Fraud

The seller uses the buyer's name and credit card number for fraudulent purposes or the buyer uses a fraudulent credit card when purchasing an item.

Black Market Goods

The seller offers goods that are stolen and/or copied (software, music CD's, and videos). Often they arrive with no warranty, instructions, or package.

Prevent Online Auction Fraud

- Understand how an online auction works before you bid on merchandise. What are your obligations as a buyer? What are the seller's obligations? Does the auction site provide insurance? How would the auction site handle a dispute between the buyer and seller?
- Don't judge by initial appearances. It can be hard to validate a seller's claim about the value of an item (*descriptions or photographs can be misleading*). Know as much as you can about the item you wish to purchase.
- Be wary of sellers who provide only an e-mail or post office box address. Check the seller's feedback rating if available on the auction site. Call the seller to see if the phone number is working, or send an e-mail to see if the e-mail address is active. If the seller is a business, check it out with the Better Business Bureau.
- Contact the seller before bidding to find out what type of payment is required, when you can expect delivery, what the return policy is, and if the merchandise is covered by a warranty.
- Try to pay the seller with a credit card so you can dispute the charges if the merchandise does not arrive or was misrepresented. Avoid paying by check or money order.
- Protect yourself from identity theft by not giving the seller personal information such as your social security number, driver's license number, or bank account number. The seller does not need this type of information to complete a transaction.

Captain Gary Crews, <i>Precinct Commander</i>
Lieutenant Tim Tanner, <i>Watch Commander</i>
Sergeant Gary Goro, <i>Supervisor</i>
Sergeant Eric Holtz, <i>Supervisor</i>
Sergeant James McBride, <i>Supervisor</i>
Sergeant James McWilliams, <i>Supervisor</i>
Officer Robert Wolff, <i>Neighborhood Policing Officer/DARE Officer</i>
Officer Brad Wood, <i>Neighborhood Policing Officer</i>
Officer Marc Beiner, <i>Precinct Traffic Officer</i>
Officer Dan Keim, <i>Precinct Traffic Officer</i>