

Folks,

As many of you are aware, I have sent out email alerts in the past concerning what we call "Deception Burglaries." For some reason, these types of incidents seem to increase with the arrival of warmer weather, although they can occur any time of the year. Please review the information below and be aware of the method of operation of these burglars and thieves and - MOST IMPORTANTLY - SHARE this information with your neighbors and families by sending them this email or talking to them. I would also ask that all Community Association Presidents assure that this email is forwarded to everyone on their association's email tree.

Deception burglaries have one common theme - to get the homeowner distracted by getting them to walk into another room, or, more frequently, asking the homeowner to step outside and then getting them to move to the side or rear of the house (out of view) while a second suspect enters the house through the unlocked door and steals whatever is quickly accessible to them. This second suspect is almost always out of the house before the homeowner re-enters. Here's how it works:

The first suspect will come to the door, knock on the door or ring the doorbell, and use some type of ruse to win the confidence of the homeowner. For example, the suspect may tell the homeowner that he works for a fence company (or satellite TV company...or roofing company...or landscaping company...you name it, they've tried it) and tell the homeowner that he or she needs to step outside with him and examine a portion of their property. To gain the confidence of the homeowner, the suspect might say "he doesn't want to infringe on property lines, so he needs the owner to examine the line in the rear of the property." If the homeowner does step outside, he or she will generally leave the door unlocked and the first suspect will escort the homeowner around the back - out of view - of that door. Sometimes, the first suspect will use a cell phone he is carrying to "call his boss...or the office...or Land Records..." when, in fact, he is ACTUALLY CALLING THE SECOND SUSPECT to let him or her know that entry into the home can now be made without detection. Sometimes, the first suspect will remain on the phone the entire time and actually feed information back to the person who has entered the house. After about ten minutes, the first suspect and the homeowner will walk back into the house AFTER the second suspect has slipped out. Sometimes, it may not be immediately apparent that items were stolen from the house (i.e. money and credit cards from a purse or wallet, jewelry, etc.) These burglars generally take smaller items that are easy to grab and conceal quickly.

That's how it works and we find that there are generally two common themes to all of these types of burglaries:

- 1) A ruse or "scam" is used to gain trust and confidence.
- 2) The elderly are more likely to be a victim of these burglaries.

Keep in mind that there are variations to this "scam" burglar. We have investigated deception burglaries that have used a ruse varying from the "package drop-off" scam (in which two suspects come to the door and ask the homeowner to accept a package for their neighbor. If they are allowed into the house, one will say she is thirsty and ask for water. As the homeowner walks the one to the kitchen and engages in conversation, the second one slips off and steals small valuables...very quickly!) to the BGE/Water Department Employee scam (in which the suspect says he or she is from BGE or the

Water Department and needs to get to the basement to investigate a "problem in the lines." When the homeowner walks that person down to the basement, the second suspect enters and steals the valuables.)

Please remember - and make sure your neighbors know too - DO NOT let anyone that you do not know and trust into your house. Employees of BGE and the City Water Department carry photo ID and do not mind being challenged for proof of employment. My suggestion is that you don't stop there - CALL the appropriate agency for verification. But be aware of this as well - IF THE "EMPLOYEE" WHO IS SEEKING ACCESS TO YOUR HOUSE PROVIDES YOU WITH THE NUMBER TO CALL FOR VERIFICATION, DON'T CALL THAT NUMBER! CALL THE NUMBER LISTED IN THE PHONE BOOK – while the person waits OUTSIDE. The reason for that is that if the person at the door is trying to scam you, the number he or she provides is probably the cell phone number of the second suspect who will tell you, yes, it's perfectly OK to let that person into your house! So, call the listed number in the phone book. Better yet, if you are really suspicious, tell the person you are calling 911. A legitimate employee will wait for the police... the deception burglars won't.

Now that you know how it works and the myriad of scenarios that are used, I hope you can see the common threads that I wrote about. Here's where we need your help - stay alert and get this word out, especially to your elderly neighbors, family members and friends. Awareness is the key. Tell them to call 911 immediately to report suspicious activity. Memorize the suspect's appearance (scars, marks, anything unusual.) If a vehicle description can safely be obtained (look to the license plate number...write it on your hand if you have to) provide that to the 911 operator so the officers can start looking right away. Be alert, be aware and be curious. Make that call to 911.

Thanks for your help....please pass this along.

Captain Martin Lurz
BCoPD Precinct 7
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