

Napton on the Hill :: Neighbourhood Watch

Newsletter - Summer 2011

Welcome to our Summer 2011 Newsletter with topical articles covering - Crimestoppers; when to use the emergency 999 facility; theft of charity bags; precautions when going away; increasing levels of identity theft.

Fortunately Napton on the Hill is still a very low crime area, so when there is a burglary or a vehicle theft it does come as quite a shock. It is always important to remain vigilant at all times and to report any suspicious events to the Police on 01926-415000. You may be thinking that your minor loss does not concern the Police, but unless it is reported none of us will know whether a new trend of similar crimes has started to hit your road or another part of the village. Ring 999 if you or someone else requires immediate medical attention; if your own welfare or that of someone else is in immediate danger; if a crime is in progress or about to happen; there is serious damage to property; a fire is in progress; or persons are trapped in buildings or vehicles, with no safe means of escape.

Crimestoppers - are you worried about what might happen to you if you talk to the police? Then Crimestoppers is here for you. There are rewards of up to £1,000 if the information leads to one or more people being arrested and charged. No personal details are recorded about you. You will not be required to reveal your name, make a statement or appear in court. Your call to Crimestoppers cannot be recorded or traced. Maybe you've heard something about a crime but don't know what to do. Perhaps you are scared to come forward and be a witness? Would you say something if no one knows it was you? We understand how hard it can be to call, which is why all the advisors are trained to help. Every day Crimestoppers help to solve 17 crimes. Remember - Crimestoppers is not an emergency service, and if you see a crime-taking place, please ring 999 to report it immediately. If you are a victim of crime you should report this to your local Police. To give information anonymously to Crimestoppers, please call, 0800 555 111.

In the last few days the side window of a parked car in Stockton was smashed, and a laptop was stolen. These crimes can be avoided if valuable items are not left in unattended vehicles.

Thieves target Charity Bags Collections - theft of filled bags is a major problem costing charities £millions each year. The key problem is the vulnerability of bags - they're on doorsteps, drives or public pavements for several hours, unsupervised, awaiting collection. Worse still, around 5% of bags are put out in the evening for collection the next day - thus increasing the risk of theft. The thieves fall into several categories:
-One-off opportunists - petty criminals just passing by
-Organised thieves - specifically targeting collections
-Competing collectors - when two collections take place on the same day there are often reports of one collector picking up bags intended for the other collector. If they are both genuine charities it's not so bad, but if one collector is commercial, the charity loses out.

What happens to stolen bags? Disposal in the UK will usually be made via car boot sales, ads in newsagent windows, small ads in local newspapers, and Ebay. With organised gangs, the clothes usually go abroad by container-lorry - especially to Eastern Europe (e.g. Lithuania and the Ukraine). To lessen these bag collection problems, Police are advising residents to take their clothes, etc to a local charity shop or recycling centre.

Going away? - this time of year often sees many of us going away for a break. Warwickshire Police would like to offer the following advice to keep your home safe during this time :-
a) make your home look like someone is in

- b) don't close your curtains as this shows the house is empty
- c) ask someone to draw curtains at night, and to remove post from behind your front door
- d) cancel any milk or newspaper deliveries
- e) use timer-switches to turn lights on when it goes dark
- f) check that all doors and windows are locked
- g) don't leave spare keys outside, or in a garage or shed
- h) put car keys or garage keys out of sight in the house
- i) use timers for radios if you are away from home overnight
- j) activate burglar alarms
- k) install external lights - they will deter the criminal who wishes to work undetected

Identity theft is big business - in 2009, YouGov research estimated that £2.6bn was stolen online from UK bank customers. Credit card ID theft increased by 23% in the first six months of that year. As many as one in eight account holders were affected, with an average of £463 being spent fraudulently in their names. You can protect yourselves by sticking to these simple rules :-

- use a different 'strong' password (mix of numbers and upper and lower case letters) for each bank account
- shred or burn bank details before binning them
- don't buy online via public wi-fi or internet connections
- use only secure 'https' web pages for transactions
- sign up for extra online security checks, such as MasterCard SecureCode or Verified by Visa
- never base security answers on your mother's maiden name, date or place of birth, or other published personal information.

Post Targeted in Identity Theft Scam - the Trading Standards Service has received a report that an elderly Warwickshire resident has been targeted by identity thieves. It is believed that the fraudsters may have used forged utility bills to attempt to have the elderly person's post re-directed to another address from where they could steal it. Had they succeeded, they might then have been able to use his bank statements and other bills to steal his identity and take out loans and mortgages in his name. He might not have been aware of the scam as his post, including correspondence regarding the loan/credit card applications would have been sent to another address. The individual even received a forged letter from 'Royal Mail' designed to put him at his ease. Checks by Royal Mail helped detect the fraud and no mail was re-directed.

Are you a victim of identity theft? Here are some of the warning signs:

- you have lost or had stolen important documents such as your passport or driving licence
- post expected from your bank has not arrived or you are receiving no post at all
- you identify entries on your personal credit file from organisations you do not normally deal with
- items have appeared on your bank or credit-card statements that you do not recognise
- you applied for a state benefit but are told that you are already claiming
- you receive bills, invoices or receipts addressed to you for goods or services you haven't asked for
- you have been refused a financial service, such as a credit card or a loan, despite having a good credit history
- a mobile-phone contract has been set up in your name without your knowledge
- you have received letters from solicitors or debt collectors for debts that aren't yours
- financial institutions that you do not normally deal with contact you to chase an outstanding debt.

Wishing all parishioners a safe crime-free Summer
Compiled, produced and published by Napton Neighbourhood Watch