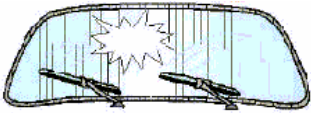


“But I locked my car.....”

Numerous reports are written daily of items being taken from vehicles.




Think about what you have in your car. What types of information are you supplying to thieves?

- Mail-Contains your name, address, checking and credit card account numbers.
- Old paycheck stubs-Social security numbers and place of employment.
- Car repair bills-name, address and phone number.
- Garage door opener-If stolen, provides easy access to your home. Even if it is not stolen, coding information can be copied for future use.
- Backup set of keys for your house.

Once a thief gets your social security number and name they have it made.

Take a moment and make sure important information is not left in your vehicle.

 *It's the law! You **must** stop for extended school bus stop arms. Besides being a safety issue for children, you could be fined \$300 and face a 30 day suspension of your license.*

The Observer

Neighborhood Watch Newsletter

Spring 2006

12th Annual Block Captains' Workshop

Saturday, April 15th is the date for the 12th Annual Block Captains' Workshop at Bloomington Civic Plaza. The workshop will start with registration at 8:30 am and conclude around 11:30 am.

We have confirmed the keynote speaker and have some exciting topics for the workshops. We don't want to let too much "out of the bag" now. More information will be mailed to you around the middle of March.

Mark your calendars now for April 15th and join your fellow block captains for what we hope will be an exciting and informative Saturday morning! See you there!



New law bars teen driver cell phone use



Effective January 1, 2006, it is illegal for the roughly 400,000 drivers under 18 with a learner's permit or a provisional license to use cell phones while driving. This law is aimed at protecting new teen drivers. This age group makes up a large percentage of reported accidents, deaths and injuries each year.

Convictions for violating the cell phone statutes will be considered moving violations on a person's driving record (Minnesota Statutes, Chapters 171.05 and 171.055). This carries with it the potential fine of up to \$100 plus court costs.

Those in violation of the law will face delays in obtaining a non-provisional license. In Minnesota, permit holders under age 18 must maintain a driving record free of any moving violations for six months to be eligible for their non-provisional license.

From 2000 to 2004, 293 16 to 18-year-olds were killed on Minnesota roads. Driving is a multi-tasking activity so all other distractions need to be limited," says Sgt. Marty Earley, Traffic Unit Supervisor. "Take your ears off the phone, put your hands on the wheel and your minds on the road."

According to a 2004 survey, 3-5 percent of the drivers in Minnesota are conversing on hand-held cellular phones at any given moment. It is conservatively estimated this represents 14,000 drivers. This number is growing by one percentage point a year.

For further information visit the Department of Public Safety website at www.dps.state.mn.us

Spring thoughts and safety tips

With spring right around the corner it may be a good time to remind everyone of a few safety precautions.

Bikes: Each year we find hundreds of bikes dumped in someone's front yard or in a park. The best security for unattended bikes is a strong lock that is applied properly. This includes while in your own garage.

Jogging or Walking: Be aware of your surroundings. Look alert and confident. Make



quick eye contact with people around you. If you are followed, turn and look at them. This gives you time to think

and lets the person know you are aware they are there. If possible, walk with a friend and have a cell phone handy.

Bloomington police stress child safety

The Bloomington Police Department is joining with the Minnesota Department of Public Safety to remind parents not to skip a step when it comes to properly securing children in a vehicle.



In Minnesota, three out of every four child restraints are used incorrectly, and many parents are unaware of the restraint steps a child should progress through as they grow - rear-facing infant seats; forward-facing toddler seats; booster seats; and seat belts.

Children must graduate into different car seats based on their age and size:

- All children age 12 and under should ride in the back seat.
- Children up to at least one year and 20 pounds should be in rear-facing seats.
- Toddlers over one year and between 20-40 pounds should use a forward-facing seat with harness straps.
- Children over four, over 40 pounds and under 4 foot 9 inches should use booster seats in combination with seat belts.

According to figures recently released by the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, 78 percent of child safety seats are used incorrectly (based on 2004 safety clinic observations). The three most common mistakes are incorrect restraint for the child, loose harness and loose installation of the restraint in the vehicle.

Officers will issue citations to drivers not in compliance with Minnesota's child restraint and seat belt laws.



For complete information on child passenger safety, car seat clinic schedules and locations throughout Minnesota, child restraint and seat belt laws as well as activities for kids visit www.buckleupkids.state.mn.us

Related links*

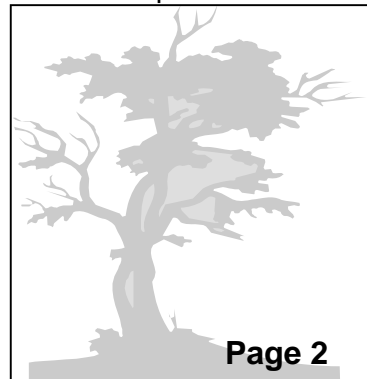
www.nhtsa.gov - The National Highway Safety Administration site has a wealth of information on a variety of topics.

www.medem.com - Information on car seats for children with special needs.

www.safe-a-rooni.org - "Snappy Safari" is an interactive site with activities for kids and adults.

www.carseatdata.org - Provides a database of car seat and vehicle measurements to help you find a good fit.

*A number of sites have information available in Spanish.



**YOU'RE IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT.
SLOW DOWN.**



Crime prevention is more than locks & hardware. It's a way of life. It is you becoming aware and involved in what goes on in your neighborhood and community.

Free criminal background checks

Criminal records are available at www.mncriminal.com
You need the legal first and last names in order to search the site. Check www.doc.state.mn.us for information on persons currently in jail or released from prison but still under supervision. Hennepin County info can be found at www13.co.hennepin.mn.us

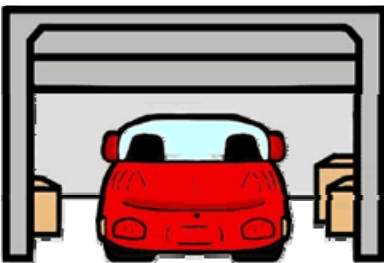


Close the door!

The next time you drive down your street, take note of how many of the garage doors are open. Maybe the homeowner just got home and is unloading groceries from the car. Maybe they got home a couple of hours ago and simply forgot to close the door. Or, they are dropping off the kids at an activity and will be gone for "just a few minutes".

The bad news here is that this is all the time it takes someone to walk into your garage and take whatever might appeal to them. Remember also that by leaving the garage door open you may be providing direct access to your home.

So, please pay attention to your garage door and close it when you leave.



Rumors, Rumors, Rumors

The Federal Trade Commission has the following notice on their website: "You may have received an email telling you that your cell phone is about to be assaulted by telemarketing calls as a result of a new cell phone number database: however, that is not the case. Federal Communications Commission regulations prohibit telemarketers from using automated dialers to call cell phone numbers."



Cell phone companies are contesting proposed legislation regulating wireless phone directories. Numerous companies are talking about compiling a directory, but by all accounts you will be included on an opt-in bases. If you do nothing, the number will be NOT be listed.

You may place your personal cell phone and/or home phone numbers online at www.donotcall.gov or call toll-free, 1-888-382-1222 (TTY 1-866-290-4236). Registration is free and there is no deadline.

This and other rumors can be checked out at www.snopes.com

What information are you sharing?

Are you aware of the information you may be sharing with strangers while talking on your cell phone in public? Do you try to accomplish several tasks at once, giving someone directions to your home over your cell phone while standing in line or ordering and paying for something over the phone by giving out your credit card number?



When you talk on your cell phone in public places, it is important to be aware of who can hear you and what they might hear. It is easy to become involved in your conversation with a friend or family member without realizing who may be listening. The following are important tips to keep in mind:

- Never order anything over a cell phone that requires you to give your address, credit card number or phone number.
- Never give directions to your home. You may be giving a thief directions as well.
- Never verbally give any private information to a cashier, clerk or receptionist. This is especially important in regards to your social security number. This is often requested when you check in at a doctor or dental office to verify your appointment.
- Be careful of discussing social and vacation plans. Be particularly cautious of casual remarks regarding time and dates you are going to be away from home.

Note: Any and all of the information contained in this newsletter can be copied and shared with your neighbors. It will also be posted on the city website.



When ordering your next batch of checks be sure they are made with tamper-resistant paper and ink. Write checks using pens with permanent, durable dark ink. Try the new gel ink pens.

Block Captains: Have you changed your e-mail address?

Have you recently changed providers and/or changed your e-mail address? E-mail is a fast way to get information to you about crime trends. The last alert bounced back a large number of the messages. Please notify me of any changes.



If you are a new Block Captain and would like to be included and receive future alerts, send me your e-mail address. You can send it to: npierson@ci.bloomington.mn.us

Don't forget to check out the City of Bloomington's web site at www.ci.bloomington.mn.us

Upcoming Events

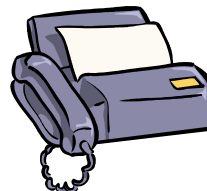


- April 15**
Block Captains' Workshop
- April 22**
Cops and Kids Baseball Clinic
- April 29**
Volunteer Recognition
Breakfast
- September 14**
Citizen's Police Academy
- August 1**
National Night Out

Is your answering machine telling secrets?



Almost everyone has an answering machine. But not every machine is "crime prevention smart"!! Please don't say: "Hi, we're not home." or "We're away for the weekend." or anything else along this line. **Instead**, do say: "I'm not available right now, but will return your call as soon as possible." or "I'm glad you called. Please leave your name and number." Phrase it any way you want, so long as you're not giving hints that you really are *not* at home—make the caller wonder.



Note: Proactive Police Services has their own fax. The number is: 952-563-8600

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH NEWSLETTER



Bloomington Police Department
1800 West Old Shakopee Road
Bloomington, MN 55431-3027