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Holiday Safety Message from the Western Springs Police Department

December 5, 2022, Western Springs - The holiday season is always a special time of year. Our busy schedules can cause us to become complacent and vulnerable to theft, fraud, and other crimes of opportunity. The Western Springs Police Department would like to take a moment to provide general safety and prevention tips to help ensure everyone has a safe and enjoyable holiday season.

VEHICLE BURGLARY AND THEFT PREVENTION

The Village and our neighbors continue to combat vehicle thefts and burglaries. In nearly all reported incidents, vehicles have been left unlocked and stolen vehicles frequently have the keys inside. Here are some tips to avoid becoming the victim of a vehicle theft or burglary:

- Keep vehicle doors locked and windows closed while in or out of your car. Utilize anti-theft equipment if available.
- Never leave your car unoccupied with the engine running or with pets or children inside.
- Do not leave any valuables in plain sight-this includes laptops, cell phones, holiday gifts, purses, etc.
- When approaching or leaving your vehicle be vigilant and aware of your surroundings.
- Do not leave key fobs in the vehicle, garage, or just inside your residence/garage.
- Park your vehicle in a garage whenever possible, and if not, park in a well lighted area.
- Install security cameras that cover the areas where vehicles are stored.

PACKAGE THEFTS

Unfortunately, package thefts are and will continue to be part of the holiday season. This year may be particularly problematic, given the large amount of holiday online shopping. Increased residential package delivery correlates to a higher probability of theft, as opportunists act on vulnerable unattended packages left on porches or in mailboxes. Here are a few tips to keep your packages from being stolen:

- Ensure all important or expensive packages are sent with signature required, tracking, or certified mail.
- Consider getting an Amazon locker or other secure location like a post office box for package delivery.
- Bring packages inside immediately after delivery, if possible.



- Utilize Ring or other video doorbell systems to monitor package delivery and deter thieves.
- Be a good neighbor and be aware of possible package thieves in and around neighbor's houses.

IDES SCAMS, RECOVERY/REFUND SCAMS, AND FRAUDULENT UTILITY SCAMS

Identity theft and fraud continue to be one of the most commonly occurring crimes within the Village. The following are tips to identify and prevent yourself from becoming a victim to fraud:

- Never click on links in unsolicited texts or emails. These are phishing scams and can either install malware on your devices or solicit personal information for the purpose of ID theft.
- If you receive a letter from the Illinois Department of Employment Security or are notified by your employer that an unemployment claim has been made in your name, contact IDES by phone or via website. Take appropriate measures with Experian, Equifax, and TransUnion to protect and monitor your credit, and be vigilant for possible breaches to other accounts.
- We strongly encourage residents to set up an online account with the Social Security Administration at ssa.gov to prevent anyone from accessing their benefit information using a stolen social security number.
- Any individuals asking to enter your residence who claim to be with a utility company should be vetted through identification and contact with the company who sent them. These are often utility scams that will result in burglary to your residence.

ADDITIONAL SAFETY TIPS

While you and your loved ones celebrate the holidays, please ensure that everyone has a safe and sober ride home. Be smart and use a rideshare service or designate a driver.

As always, the Western Springs Police Department wishes you and your family a safe, happy, and healthy holiday season.

Please like and follow the Police Department's Facebook and Twitter pages for additional public information and education.

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