



Olympia Police Department



Block Watch Quarterly

Spring 2008

National Crime Prevention Council's "Catalyst" Newsletter

A great source of crime prevention information is NCPD's monthly "Catalyst" newsletter. Each month, prevention strategies for home and family are highlighted, along with information about how to prevent emerging new crime. It is now available electronically at www.ncpc.org/publications/catalyst-newsletter-2008/. Here's a sample article from this month's edition:

Beware of Tax Rebate Scammers

Scammers are out in force trying to separate you from your tax rebate check.

With the first of the government's tax rebate checks in the mail, scammers, no laggards at going where the money is, are already hard at work separating taxpayers from their money.

For many scam artists, following the money means following the headlines. And that's certainly true in the case of the tax rebates, officially "economic stimulus checks."

Here's how it works: Scammers claiming to be from the Internal Revenue Service or the Social Security Administration call and say they need your information to be able to deposit your rebate directly into your account. They may ask for your checking account number, Social Security number, or other personal information—the kind they can use to commit identity theft.

However, you should never give out your personal information over the telephone, and neither the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) or the Social Security Administration (SSA) will ever ask you to provide it in response to an unsolicited call or email.

The IRS does not gather information for rebates by telephone. Nor does it send unsolicited emails to taxpayers about tax account matters. The only way you can get a tax rebate is if you filed a tax return. Similarly, if you get an email out of the blue from someone claiming to be from the IRS that asks you to call a phone number or email back your personal information, don't click on any links. Forward it to phishing@irs.gov and then delete it. Clicking on a link in an unsolicited email can make you susceptible to identity theft. The only official IRS website is located at www.irs.gov.

If you get a call from someone who claims to be from the SSA and who asks for your personal information, say you're not interested, then hang up. Then call the SSA's toll-free number, 800-772-1213, to verify the reason for the contact and the caller's identity. The SSA will not send unsolicited email. For more information, visit www.ssa.gov.

Your first reaction to being asked for personal information by someone you don't know should always be to say "No"!

OPD Profile

The Olympia Police Department Cadets are assigned various important tasks to assist other department members and the public. One of the duties that takes up much of their time is dealing with abandoned vehicles on public right of ways. They averaged 120 of these incidents a month for the first quarter of 2008. Unlike other cadet programs, they are not officially on the path to become fully commissioned officers, but most tend to be interested in Law Enforcement as a career. This is true of our current group of cadets (L-R), Cadet Patrick, Cadet Renard and Cadet Schoolcraft.

All three are grateful for the opportunity to experience police work on a daily basis and gain knowledge that will help them in the future, possibly continuing to become officers with OPD.



Gas Theft

These rising gas prices are sure to bring an increase in gas theft. Whether the thieves simply siphon or actually cut a fuel line, the results are sure to be expensive. One simple protective measure is the purchase of a locking gas cap, if available for your vehicle. They aren't completely foolproof but do add an extra layer of security. Additional prevention is the same as preventing any theft from a vehicle:

- Park in well-lit areas.
- If you have a garage, use it.
- Report suspicious people.
- Share information with neighbors.

In addition, lock up any other item using gas (lawn mowers, weed eaters, ATVs, etc.) and extra gas tanks.

Many gas stations are now requiring prepayment for gas. Stolen credit cards are an easy way to get free fuel, so keep them well-guarded and monitor your statements. If you discover theft or misuse, please contact police. Many convenience stores now have excellent video systems that can help catch the thief.

Bicycle Safety

Whether your family is biking for recreation or a commute contest, spring is a great time to review basic safety rules. Community Programs has several excellent brochures free upon request:

[The Smart Route to Bicycle Safety](#)

[Washington State Bicycle Traffic Laws](#)

NOW RECRUITING...

The Olympia Explorers are now recruiting young people interested in law enforcement. To qualify, you must be at least 15 and a graduate of the 8th grade. Explorers meet twice a month and participate in special events. For more information, call Amy at 753-8049.

I've included a supplement with this newsletter entitled [Twelve Ways to Improve Your Neighborhood Right Now](#). I hope you find it interesting and can use some of the tips to make things even better in your Block Watch area.