



Ramsey County Sheriff's Office

Bob Fletcher, Sheriff

Neighborhood Watch

Public Safety Services Division – Crime Prevention Unit

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Neighbors and Deputies working together for safer communities



Block Captain News – November 2021

DST to CST – clocks turn back Sunday, November 7

When the clocks turn back on Sunday, November 6, our evenings will become darker much earlier. With the early onset of nightfall please adjust and keep an eye out for pedestrians, especially those in dark clothing. Children and adults are reminded to put electronic devices down, keep heads up and walk, don't run, across the street. Cross the street at corners, using traffic signals and crosswalks whenever possible. Choose the safest routes to walk. Stay on the sidewalks or paths. If there is no sidewalk, walk on the left side of the road. Walk single file facing the traffic.

It's also time to review your city regulations on seasonal parking and snow removal policies. Most of our local communities have ticketing and towing after snowfalls (ranging from 1" to 2"), and many have restrictions on overnight parking.

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Winter Driving & Motor Vehicle Thefts

Tis the season for snow, cold, bad roads, and thieves driving off in vehicles left running unattended with the keys in the ignition. Almost all motor vehicle thefts these early weeks of cooler weather have had one common denominator: the keys have been inside the vehicle. Many stolen while warming up.

Here's a few quick winter driving safety reminders:

- Under Minnesota law, it is illegal to leave the car unattended and running with the keys in the ignition. But, if you have a remote starter installed, you can start your car without putting the keys in the ignition.
- Never warm up a vehicle in an enclosed area, such as a garage.
- Clear all snow and ice from windshield and all windows before driving.
- Make certain your tires are properly inflated.
- Never mix radial tires with other tire types.
- Keep your gas tank at least half full to avoid gas line freeze-up.
- If possible, avoid using your parking brake in cold, rainy and snowy weather.
- Do not use cruise control when driving on any slippery surface (wet, ice, sand).
- Always look and steer where you want to go.
- Use your seat belt every time you get into your vehicle.
- Stay home. If you really don't have to go out, don't. Even if you can drive well in the snow, not everyone else can. Don't tempt fate: If you don't have somewhere you have to be, watch the snow from indoors.

Resources for winter driving tips: <https://www.nhtsa.gov/winter-driving-tips>;
<http://exchange.aaa.com/safety/driving-advice/winter-driving-tips/#.WlY5s03ruUk>

Safety reminders for the Holiday Season

Nothing can ruin the holiday spirit faster than becoming a victim of crime. Unfortunately, the holiday season is a time of opportunity for thieves to burglarize your home for cash, credit cards and gifts. As we make plans to spend time with families and friends this season, please remember some important crime prevention steps for a safer season:

Prevent theft from your vehicle:

- Don't leave valuables in your vehicle.
- Always lock your car, and park in a well-lit and well-traveled area.
- When running errands, shopping, or traveling, make an extra stop before arriving at your destination to lock valuables in your trunk. This helps to prevent thieves from seeing that you've got valuables in the trunk.
- If you must leave personal property in your vehicle, make sure it is out of view.
- Be aware in parking lots. Have your keys in hand when approaching your vehicle, ready to unlock the door.



Financial card and online shopping considerations:

- If you go to an automatic teller machine for cash, check for people around and make sure it is well-lit and in a safe location.
- Carry only the credit cards you need and avoid carrying large amounts of cash.
- FTC video online shopping tips: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3w4t1dYCayM&feature=youtu.be>
- Keep your personal information private and your password secure. Do not respond to requests to verify your password or credit card information unless you initiated the contact. Legitimate businesses will not contact you in this manner.
- Page four has more in-depth information about online shopping in this year of chip shortages.

Package theft prevention

- Ask a trustworthy neighbor to watch for and retrieve your package when it is delivered.
- Request "signature required" service from the delivery company.
- Place a storage container, such as a large Rubbermaid, on your stoop for packages to be placed in so they are not readily seen by people driving by.
- Place a note on front door asking delivery driver to leave packages on the back steps.
- Have packages delivered to your work or a business address if possible.
- Deposit outgoing mail in official USPS drop boxes.

Home security and safety tips:

- Don't display wrapped boxes under a lighted tree in the front window for thieves to see as they drive past your home.
- Don't pile up-empty gift boxes from your new computers, televisions, game systems and other electronics in front of your home on garbage day. Thieves will appreciate knowing that you have expensive gifts inside your home for them to steal. Instead, break down boxes and conceal the advertising when setting them out for recycling.
- Do NOT post your activities (gifts or plans to be away from home) on social media pages.
- Turn on outside lights to deter burglars.

Holiday themed charity & other phone scams:

- Verify the charitable organization & use of funds.
- Government organizations don't use gift cards as a method of payment.
- When in doubt – check it out. Criminals isolate victims and push for quick response.

Report any suspicious activity to the police, call 911.

- Page three explores the "suspicious activity" issue in more depth.



What is “Suspicious Activity”?

– It is about behaviors and activities, NOT about how a person looks

Suspicious activity is any behavior or activity that seems unusual or out-of-place. Suspicious behavior can be anything; however here are some examples of behaviors and activities that may be associated with criminal activity:

- People looking into parked vehicles, trying doors of different vehicles, or hiding from passing traffic
- Alarms sounding or glass being broken
- Slow moving vehicles (at night without lights) driving aimlessly
- Apparent business transactions being conducted from a vehicle
- Someone seen being forced into a vehicle
- Persons dressed inappropriately for the weather (ex: wearing heavy coats in summer)
- Strangers looking into neighbors' homes when they are gone
- Abandoned vehicle parked on your block
- Someone seen with a weapon
- People monitoring or photographing building or location security or security procedures
- Briefcases, backpacks, or packages that have been left behind / unattended
- Cars or trucks left in "No Parking Zones" in front of important buildings or locations
- Intruders in secure areas where they are not supposed to be
- Chemical smells or fumes that worry you
- People asking questions about sensitive information such as building blueprints, security plans, or VIP travel schedules without a right or need to know
- People purchasing supplies or equipment that can be used to make bombs or weapons or purchasing uniforms without the proper credentials

While some, if not all, of the above situations could have innocent explanations, the Sheriff's Office would rather proactively respond than be called to investigate a crime days later.

If you are unsure about whether to report a suspicious activity that you see, REPORT IT, and let the law enforcement decide what to do with the information. Reporting is easy!

How to report? - Call 9-1-1 as soon as it is safe to do

When calling 9-1-1 be prepared to answer: “Where is your emergency?” and “What is your emergency?” and “Who is calling?”

Basically, when talking with the 9-1-1 telecommunicator it is important to: Stay calm; Speak clearly; Explain what is happening; Provide your exact location; Answer all questions; Do not hang up until asked to. While talking with you, dispatchers are working to discover what is happening, where it is happening and what resources to send your way.

When reporting suspicious activity be as specific as possible about what you are witnessing:

- **Location** – address, block number, specific location, or intersection
- **Activity** – what suspicious activity are you reporting
- **Description of suspect** – sex, race, age, heights, weight, hair color and length, facial hair, colors and style of clothing
- **Description of vehicle** – color, model, make, license number, unique features (damage etc.)
- **Direction** – if the subject flees give direction of travel, vehicle information

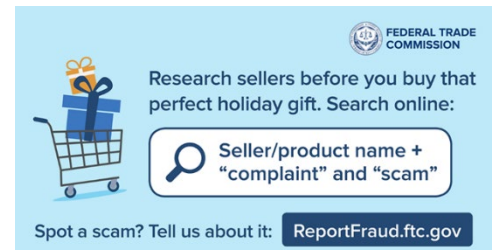
Holiday shopping during a chip shortage

by Carly Johnson
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If you've been keeping up with the news, you might have heard about a global chip shortage. Why does that matter to your holiday shopping? Well, a lot of things you might buy for the holidays, like toys, have chips in them, so the shortage means prices are going up, and items that have chips can be harder to find.

Scammers follow the headlines — and just like with the mask shortage, scammers will set up shop, “sell” what everyone is trying to buy — but not deliver. Here are some tips to avoid scams as you get ready for holiday shopping this season.

- **Research sellers before you buy.** Search online for the name of the seller and product, plus words like “complaint” and “scam.” And read [reviews](#) about the seller and their products, too.
- **Feed your inner skeptic.** This year’s “it” game? For a great price in mid-December? From a seller you’ve never heard of? See bullet #1.
- **Compare products.** Even with the chip shortage, shop around to make sure you’re getting the best deal. [Comparison shop](#) online, looking at prices, delivery dates, and even discounts or coupon codes.
- **Pay by credit card.** Paying by [credit card](#) gives you more rights to dispute the charge if something goes wrong. And if someone tells you to pay by wire transfer, cryptocurrency, or by mailing cash, stop and find another seller. That’s how scammers tell you to pay.
- **Keep records.** Save copies of your receipts and order confirmations from online orders. Hold onto them until you get what you ordered and know you won’t return things.



Spot a scam while holiday shopping? We want to hear about it. Report it to the FTC at [ReportFraud.ftc.gov](#).

Neighborhood Watch is about Neighbors and Deputies working together

Involved neighbors are more likely to have open communication lines with each other, deputies, and the whole community. When neighbors know each other’s names, normal patterns, and look out for each other, it is likely that they will report any activity that doesn’t fit with regular schedules. Involved neighbors look out for each other.

Information sharing on crime prevention, crime trends, and law enforcement issues is a key element to the Neighborhood Watch program of the Sheriff’s Office.

Neighborhood Watch program [information and forms](#) to help your block organization are available on the county [website](#). **Please complete and return the [Block Captain registration form](#)** to ensure the Sheriff’s Office has your most current contact information. THANKS!



Thank you for working for safer neighborhoods!



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Remember – when you See Something, Say Something, Call 9-1-1