

Richmond

BLOCK



WATCH

Newsletter

Working together to prevent crime

Summer 2004

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Prevent Bike Theft

Every year hundreds of bicycles are recovered by the police, but they are unable to be returned to their legal owners because there is no proof that the bicycle actually belongs to them. Don't let this happen to you! Make sure your and your children's bikes are engraved with your BC Driver's License number. Remember to also engrave your bike accessories. Record the serial number and store the number in a safe place. Also record the type and make of bike, the colour and any special equipment. Take a picture of your bike and note any unusual markings or dents.

If you value your bike - use a high quality lock of case hardened steel - poor quality locks can be cut in seconds. Secure your bike to an immovable object with the lock through both wheels and frame. Only leave it in well-lit, busy areas. Don't leave your bike accessories (pump, water bottle, etc.) on your locked bike.

If you are using a cable and lock system, match up the quality of the lock and the cable. No sense in having a \$30.00 lock and a \$2.00 cable. If you have a quick release seat post or wheel, make sure you take it with you, as these devices make it even more convenient for thieves to remove them from your bike. Your bike is only as safe as you make it.

Enjoy your ride and always wear a bike helmet!

So...you think you got a bargain!!

A friend of a friend told me of a terrific bargain on a set of golf clubs. Only \$50.00 for a complete set, and the putter alone was worth more than that!

The friend seemed a little jealous of this fellow's good fortune, but would not divulge his friend's name...could it be that he knew the clubs were stolen and that his friend was as much a crook as the person who actually stole the clubs??

It's sad but true, that if there were no people who would buy stolen merchandise, there would be a lot less theft. Very few thieves steal things that they need, but most thefts are a method of getting money to support habits, such as drugs

or alcohol. People who buy stolen merchandise are only contributing to these habits.

Sure, we all like to get a bargain, but are we fooling ourselves to say we didn't know the articles were stolen when we know we are paying a small percentage of its actual worth, or when we buy it from a person whom we don't know and has no logical reason for selling the article at such a low price?

We would not like to think of ourselves as "receivers of stolen goods", making us as guilty as the person who actually stole the goods. Nor would we want to think that the "bargain" VCR we bought for \$50.00 actually came for the home of one of our neighbours, who is now out over \$300.00. Remember, don't count on home insurance to cover the cost of this theft, many policies now have a \$500.00 deductible clause.

If we can resist these "bargains" and make it unprofitable for the thieves that break into our homes, often causing more damage than the value of the merchandise stolen, we will have come a long way towards helping to eliminate the break and enter occurrences in our community.

Mail Fraud

Here is an example of an incident that happened in Surrey: A resident was approached by a male claiming to have car trouble and asking the homeowner to use their phone. The call was made and the male returned to his car...which suspiciously started immediately. Seconds later, Visa called back asking if a credit card has just been activated. The agent was suspicious as she thought it had sounded like a man impersonating a woman. On this occasion, the circumstances were explained and the fraud did not take place.

What is happening in a case like this is that the suspect had intercepted a credit card (stolen mail). In order to get the credit card activated, a phone call is required from the card-holder's residence. There might be any number of 'angles' a suspect might use in order to use your phone. Bottom line is DO NOT let a stranger into your home to use the phone. If they are in difficulty, say (through the door or window) that you will call 9-1-1 for them. If this is not legitimate, they will disappear fast - looking for a better victim. DON'T LET YOURSELF BE A VICTIM. Be aware and alert.

There have also been cases of suspects wearing Canada Post Shirts!

Tips:

- Canada Post employees carry identification and will produce when asked.
- Any vehicle used to deliver mail will have a Canada Post logo attached to it, either a magnetic sign on the driver's door or on the roof.
- They don't necessarily always have a uniform as their work sometimes is contracted out.
- The scam artist when challenged, will usually say that his/her ID is in the vehicle.
- Be aware of the time that your mail is usually delivered and promptly pick it up.
- If you are expecting cheques in the mail and they don't arrive on the expected date, make calls to find out if they have been sent.

Mr. "Car Thief" Would like to thank you!

"Thank you for making my chosen life of crime so easy!"

Thank you for:

- Leaving stuff in your car, like coats, briefcases and sunglasses. I can easily get a few bucks when I sell them. It is amazing what people will buy if it is cheap enough! Those few bucks allow me to buy my drugs.
- Thanks also for leaving stuff in the trunk. You think it is safe in there...well, think again. I can break into your car in 30 seconds and pop your trunk instantly. I find the most expensive stuff there. I have found tools, new shoes, sports equipment and even laptop computers. I love breaking into the trunks – it is like finding buried treasure.
- I especially want to thank the people who make it so easy to steal their car. Sometimes all I want is a ride to Burnaby or Vancouver. I don't have a car of my own, so I just grab one to get around. When I'm ready to come home, I just steal another one. I am so happy when I find cars that don't have any anti-theft junk. Oh yeah, sometimes cars are even left unlocked...a piece of cake! In just a few seconds I am on my way in your car.

- Thanks for thinking I won't steal your car because it is old or a wreck. I don't care what I drive sometimes, as long as it gets me where I want to go.
- You know, I have often thought how my life might change if all you people made my job harder. Can you imagine if every time I looked into a car there was nothing in it, nothing to steal or even worse, if every car had an anti-theft device? I would be out of business. I might have to get a real job and that thought makes me sick.

Top Insurance Frauds of 2003

The Insurance Bureau of Canada went through its files and found numerous flagrant examples of people making false claims. The best of the worst....(Originally printed in The Vancouver Sun, Dec 18/03)

1. Love Hurts scam: Cyclist reports injuries after being hit by a car and received \$22,000 in compensation from his insurance company. But all was not as it seemed and the case ended up in court where the evidence included a toothpick and an overly helpful girlfriend. She was behind the wheel and had deliberately run into the man, gently she'd hoped. That's where the toothpick came in. The man had stuck it up his nose to get some blood and the insurance money flowing. The defendant's lawyer points out, in vain, that the man had in fact lost some teeth. Outcome: Cyclist lost case.
2. A Burning Love scam: Intoxicated man gets in his pickup, soon crashing into another vehicle. He fled the scene in the damaged truck, and later that night drove it to the outskirts of town and set it on fire. He told police his truck had been stolen and the thief must have caused the accident. He also filed a theft claim. Outcome: Charges for both drunk driving and fraud.
3. Next Stop Jail scam: A city bus was stopped on the street when a truck rammed into its rear end. Impact was minor but 44 passengers on board claimed to have been injured. It turned out that wasn't all they had in common. They had all been recruited to take the fateful bus ride with the promise of \$100 now and more down the road. Scamsters planned to make a pile of money on fake claims and bogus rehab therapy. Police wondered how so many people could have been injured in such a minor accident. Outcome: Conspirators, including truck driver, face fraud charges and could go to prison.



4. **The Very Bad Driver scam:** In 1998, a woman was reversing out of her driveway, her husband told the insurance company, when she lost control and rammed into another vehicle which in turn injured three pedestrians. In a panic she put the car into drive, lurched forward and slammed into the garage. The car was a write-off and the company paid \$18,000. Outcome: Five years later, a tip leads to investigators discovering the wife was in fact at work when the accident happened. Husband fined, ordered to repay money.
5. **The Party Girl scam:** Young woman receives \$25,000 cash settlement after she is injured in a car accident. She bought a house and the party began. Wild parties took their toll on the house and soon it needed several expensive repairs. However, the money was now all gone and so along with her boyfriend she schemed to burn the house down and get a new one courtesy of her insurance company. A fire set in the basement burned through a plastic water pipe and the spray extinguished the blaze. Woman files claim for smoke damage. Outcome: When investigators found several items on her list of losses in local pawnshops they told her that the party was over.
6. **Blood Simple scam:** Police arrived on scene of single vehicle accident, find wrecked car but no sign of driver. Owner later tells them he had been drinking that night and, being a responsible citizen, had asked someone at the bar to drive his car home. Only he couldn't remember who it was. The police were suspicious and so were insurance investigators. They had a DNA sample from the car's airbag and invited the owner down to a lab to be tested to see if it was a match. Instead, the man sent a friend to give a blood sample but his friend's photo and fingerprints revealed the ruse. Outcome: Claim denied, charges laid against both men.
7. **Lost in Translation scam:** Mastermind of what may have been one of the biggest fraud rings in Canadian history recruited 59 friends, family members and colleagues, then coached them in staging bogus accidents. When it came time to file their claims, he became their legal adviser, helping them deal with the paperwork and procedures. He was also a paralegal and an official court interpreter. In several cases he also acted as a translator for his recruits, probably to ensure they got their story straight. Outcome: Charges laid.
8. **Grand Theft scam:** Man who reported his Jeep Cherokee stolen from a mall parking lot, later received \$40,000 from the insurance company. Six years later, in 2003, a police officer discovered the Jeep wrapped in a tarpaulin inside a rental storage unit, in pristine condition. Before he called the owner with the good news, the officer did a little checking and discovered the storage rental payments had been charged to the owner's credit card. Outcome: A judge ordered the owner to repay the \$40,000 and tacked on a \$3,000 fine.
9. **Rubbed the Wrong Way scam:** Massage therapy can be a very useful treatment for helping accident victims recover from their injuries. One massage therapy clinic, however, apparently discovered a miraculous new form of massage. The patient, it seems, didn't even need to appear. It was just as well since the healing hands of the masseuses were too busy filling out claim forms. A tip led to a search warrant and the insurance scam was uncovered. Outcome: Owner slapped with a range of fraud charges.
10. **Thin Air scam:** Accountant who claimed he bought an air conditioner was contradicted by its seller, who said the man never paid for the machine. After the seller repossessed it from the man's home, the accountant called his insurance company to report the unit stolen. Outcome: Accountant could produce no receipt; claim denied.

Plan Your Annual Block Watch party!

Summer is the most popular time of year for Block Watch parties. Remember, it should not always be left up to your Block Watch Captain or Co-Captain(s) to plan the event. Everyone should be encouraged to get involved. Your Captain and Co-Captain(s) have already volunteered to establish and maintain your Block Watch group and they should not always be taxed with having to make all the plans and do all the organizing for the events.

Keep it fun. If everyone contributes, it is a lot less work and does not become costly for anyone. Have a BBQ, a pot luck, or an ice cream tasting party. Have everyone bring a different flavour of ice cream. Have some people bring the toppings and someone else bring different types of sprinkles. It's great fun for the kids, but remember, we all have a little bit of kid in all of us, so it's fun for all ages!



The concept of the Block Watch program is to bring neighbourhoods closer together and to know your neighbours. You have likely had changes in your neighbourhood lately, especially with the activity in the real estate market this past year. This is the perfect opportunity to have the new people meet the rest of the neighbourhood and for you to update a new Block Watch map for your group.

Make it fun! Take pictures and send some into us with a little description of your party.

Disturbing Crime Trend

Some criminals have been known to read the obituaries to learn the date and time of a funeral/mass and service and/or the burial time. The suspects then get the address from the phone book. The criminals know the home will be empty during these periods and may break in. Please remember to ask a friend or trusted neighbour to remain in the home at these times.

More Safety Tips

- Should a stranger request to use your phone, do not allow the person to enter your home. Offer to make the call for them.
- Avoid after-hours access to bank machines where you are not visible or cannot see into the bank machine area prior to entering it.
- Obtain a "Call Police" sign and emergency kit in the event of a car break down.
- Remember 9-1-1 on a cellular telephone does not give Police your location. Know where you are so that emergency services can find you.
- If you are being followed in your car, try to obtain the licence plate number as well as the make, model, colour and a description of the driver, if possible.
- Place an exterior light over every door and window. Most burglars don't want to try to break into a home while "in the spotlight". Mount these lights in out-of-the-reach locations so burglars can't easily unscrew or break the bulbs.
- Don't keep large sums of cash at home.
- Don't put your street address in newspaper ads that advertise valuable items for sale.
- Keep vehicles parked fully under carports so intruders can't climb up to the carport roof and second floor windows.



Volunteer Recruiting

The South Arm Community Policing Station is currently looking for volunteers for front desk duties and for assistance in delivering several outreach crime prevention programs such as Lock Out Auto Crime, Speed Watch, and the Volunteer Bike Patrol.

Volunteer applicants must be 19 years of age or older, a Richmond resident, and be able to obtain a valid security clearance. Successful applicants will be expected to contribute 8 hours of service per month. Applications are available for pickup at the South Arm Community Police Station located at 8880 Williams Road, Richmond. For further information, please call the station at (604) 713-2300.

Townhall Meeting



Safety...it's everyone's responsibility.

The RCMP are hosting a series of Townhall meetings throughout the coming year to provide a forum for public discussion regarding safety concerns. The first meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 19th at McMath Secondary School, 4251 Garry Street. The public are invited to meet our partner agencies and visit their display booths starting at 6:00 p.m. The panel discussions/questions and answers period will be between 7:00 - 9:00 p.m. The second meeting will be held on Monday, May 31st at the East Richmond Community Hall, 12360 Cambie Road, starting at 6:00 p.m.

We hope to see you and your neighbours there!

Check out Block Watch on-line!

Visit us at <http://www.city.richmond.bc.ca/blockwatch>

Look for the monthly Island Beat crime prevention newspaper column in the Richmond Review. This column is co-written by Cst. Anette Martin and Cst. Julie Powroznik of the Richmond RCMP Crime Prevention Unit and Wendy Milford and Sheila Yamamoto of the Richmond Block Watch program.



Royal Canadian Mounted Police



City of Richmond