

CRIME PREVENTION

WORKING TOGETHER TO PREVENT CRIME

NEWSLETTER

Canada Revenue Agency or an Imposter?

In some cases, the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) will contact you for legitimate concerns or questions. They may call you by phone, email, or send a letter to verify information and notify you of any changes to your tax information. CRA will only text you if you enrolled in multi-factor authentication. However, legitimate communications are sometimes mistaken for scams because people are unsure whether the information they received is a scam or a legitimate communication. This confusion adds stress during tax season as scammers pretend to be the CRA in order to trick people into giving away their financial and personal information.



An example of a scam could be the following: You receive a phone call with the caller ID showing it's CRA. The caller demands immediate payment or you will be arrested by the police. They transfer you to an "officer" who instructs you to purchase cryptocurrency. If you refuse, you will be arrested. The scammer aims to pressure and confuse you. Stay calm, watch for red flags, and hang up.

- **Receiving an email asking you to enter your personal info or make a payment through a link** – CRA will not send an email with a link asking you to enter personal or financial information. The email will not come from a generic email domain or ask you to reply. CRA will only send you emails if you registered for email notifications and have a new message to view in your CRA online account, or if you requested the CRA agent to send you something during a meeting or call.
- **Government messages through social media or text message** – The CRA will never use social media or third-party apps, to contact you. They will only send you a text message if you enrolled in multi-factor authentication for the purpose of logging in.
- **Demanding payment through e-transfers, prepaid gift cards, or cryptocurrencies** – Legitimate government agencies will not demand or use unconventional payment options. In most fraud cases, scammers ask for these types of payments because they are difficult to track and recover.
- **Threats to arrest, deport, or imprisonment** – Scammers use threatening language to scare you into not thinking clearly. They may threaten you if they are not paid immediately. Do not give in to their demands and hang up. Verify the caller is from the CRA by using their online tool or calling them yourself after verifying the phone number. Do not return the call from the number on your caller ID, as the phone number could be spoofed. You can contact the CRA by calling 1-800-959-8281 as an individual or 1-800-959-5525 as a business.

Reporting a Potential Scam

Report the scam if you have been a victim of fraud or if a scammer has tricked you into giving away personal or financial information. Report this to your local police, the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre, your financial institution, and credit reporting agencies such as Equifax and TransUnion.

Knowing your Baseline

Last year, in our newsletter, we wrote about starting a New Year's goal to learn about your neighbourhood baseline. Have you built an understanding of your neighbourhood? To review, a baseline is defined as a starting point used for comparisons. Everyone's baseline will be different, depending on the details of the area they live. Simply paying attention will help you notice the norms in your community. Strengthening your baseline can increase your situational awareness and help prevent future crimes.



What You Know vs What You See

If something happens in your neighbourhood, your baseline can come in handy because it helps you determine if what you see is suspicious or normal. Imagine this scenario: your neighbour and his wife are going on a trip for the long weekend. He informs you they are taking their white SUV with them and asks you to watch over their home. While they are away, you notice a black truck parked in their driveway. Someone is seen moving a TV from the house to the truck. You know that something is wrong in this situation because the facts don't match your baseline. In fact, calling 911 would be the appropriate response, as a break-in is probably happening in this example.

An effective way to build your baseline is to join a Block Watch group. Block Watch is a crime prevention program designed to bring neighbours together for the common goal of crime prevention. Neighbours make a commitment to help one another and be the eyes and ears of the neighbourhood. Your neighbourhood baseline can evolve every year as neighbours move in and out. Thus, it is important to keep yourself informed through observations and connections within a Block Watch group. With knowledge of your neighbourhood and a connection with your community, you can make a better judgement about what you see.

If You See Something Suspicious, Say Something!

When you see suspicious activity or a crime, report it! Never assume someone else will call the police. You may have seen details that others missed, or you may be the only one who witnessed the situation. Reporting also shows potential thieves that there are watchful eyes in the neighbourhood.

To report suspicious activity in Richmond, call 604-278-1212. Ensure that you are in a safe place and pay attention to the details that help you answer the **4 Ws** (who, what, when, and where). These details will help the call taker gather accurate information about the person, vehicle, or event to pass on to the police. In some cases, a suspicious activity can escalate into a crime. If you believe a crime is about to happen or someone's health, safety, or property is in jeopardy, please call 911. For example, suspicious activity might involve someone looking into vehicles on your street, warranting a call to the non-emergency line. However, if the person starts trying each door handle, it could suggest they are attempting a break-in, which would escalate the call to 911.



Spring Into Crime Prevention Action

As the weather gets warmer, people will be out more often to enjoy the sunshine. Take steps to ensure that your spring is crime-free.

Your Home – Trim back trees and bushes around your windows and doors. Large trees and bushes can block the view from the outside, providing concealment for thieves. After working in your yard, remember to put your tools away inside so they cannot be used to break into your home. Lastly, close and lock all windows and doors before leaving the house, even those on the second floor.



Long Weekends or Vacation Plans – Plan ahead. Ask a trusted person to pick up your mail or have it held by Canada Post. Make sure all electronic crime prevention tools are working properly, such as alarms, cameras, timers, and lights so you can monitor your home while you are away.

Personal Belongings – Carry only essential items and keep them with you at all times. If you need to put something aside, such as a bag or sporting equipment, ask a trusted individual to watch over them while you are busy. Plan ahead and put items in the trunk of your car before heading to your destination.

To Start a Block Watch Group

Interested in starting a Block Watch group? Let us tell you a little about Block Watch! Block Watch is a program that brings the police and the community together. This program helps you build connections and relationships with people in your neighbourhood and the police while striving for the common goal of crime prevention.

Select a Captain/Co-Captain

- ◇ Each Captain/Co-Captain has to submit an application and will be contacted for a suitability interview. Candidates will then need to complete a free Police Information Check.

Recruit and build your group

- ◇ Upon confirmation from the Block Watch office on completing and passing all required steps in becoming a Captain/Co-Captain, you may begin to recruit homes that are near to you with the provided recruiting materials from the Block Watch office. To build an effective Block Watch, try to involve 50-75% of households in your area.

Complete activation of your team

1. **Complete** Block Watch Captain/Participant training – invite everyone in your group to participate in a virtual/in-person training session.
2. **Submit** your participating household list.
3. **Qualify** for Block Watch street signs once the above steps are completed.

If you are interested in creating a Block Watch group in your area, email us your name and address at blockwatch@richmond.ca or call 604-207-4829.

BUSINESS LINK

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Theft From Auto for Commercial Vehicles

Business vehicles are prime targets for thieves, especially when left unattended with valuable tools, equipment or merchandise inside. Theft can result in financial loss and operational delays. Whether you have a fleet or a single vehicle, it is important to educate employees on how to prevent auto theft. Commercial vehicles are targeted for their valuable tools, electronics, and work gear. Moreover, employee habits can create opportunities for theft. For example, a common habit is leaving the keys in the vehicle or keeping the vehicle unlocked, which allow others with easy access. This practice presents a prime opportunity for thieves to gain entry because the vehicle is unlocked. Businesses can prevent theft from vehicles by educating staff on the following:



- **Lock it up** – Teach employees to lock their unsupervised vehicle during work and after hours. Locking the vehicle prevents opportunistic thieves who are looking for a quick theft.
- **Remove keys** – Remove keys from the ignition whenever you leave the vehicle, even for a short time. A common trend is leaving keys in unlocked vehicles at the end of the day, which gives thieves an opportunity to steal items or, in some cases, the vehicle itself. Keep all spare keys in a secure location inside the business.
- **Record identifiers** – Mark tools and equipment with unique identifiers. Write down serial numbers to keep a record of equipment. Serial numbers and identifiers can help police recover and return stolen items by tracing them back to your business.

To conclude, proper training and guidelines can remove conveniences that cause opportunistic crimes. Remind employees of the tips above to significantly decrease the likelihood of theft from auto.

Please report all suspicious or criminal activity to the police.

Richmond RCMP Non-Emergency line [604-278-1212](tel:604-278-1212). If you witness a crime in progress, dial **9-1-1**.

Online reporting available at bc.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/richmond/report for the following:

- Damage/mischief to property under \$5,000
- Damage/mischief to a vehicle under \$5,000
- Hit and run to an unoccupied vehicle or property
- Theft of bicycle under \$5,000
- Theft under \$5,000
- Theft from vehicle under \$5,000
- Lost property

