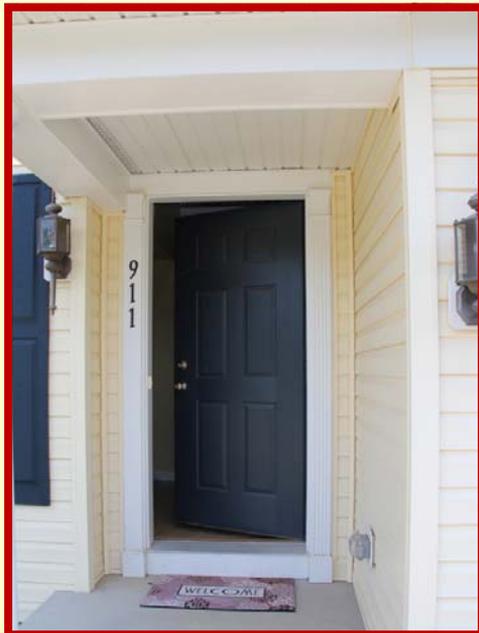
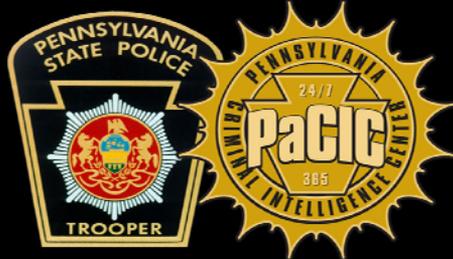


Enhancing Senior Safety



Protect Your Home From Scam Artists!

P E N N S Y L V A N I A S T A T E P O L I C E



Pennsylvania Criminal Intelligence Center

Traveling criminals are a growing group of individuals who abide by no jurisdictional boundaries. These “roaming thieves” make their living preying on and taking advantage of others, usually the elderly. The best way to avoid becoming a victim of fraud by these criminals is to be alert to their potential scams. This pamphlet is designed to educate seniors on the types of crimes commonly perpetrated by traveling criminals and how to avoid becoming a victim. If you have been approached by anyone you believe may have committed any of the scams mentioned, contact your local police department.

COMMON SCAMS

HOME REPAIR FRAUD

In these scams, seniors are approached by individuals offering to perform various home repair jobs such as driveway repair, painting, roof or gutter repair, power pressure washing, and chimney cleaning. The criminals offer significant discounts, claim to have materials left over from other jobs, or claim they were sent by a close friend or relative. Once the job is completed, the cost of the work is significantly more than the initial quote and payment in cash is demanded. The quality of the work will be poor. The con artists may accompany the victim to the bank to ensure payment in cash.

IMPOSTER BURGLARY

Transient criminals often invade homes using a Utility Imposter Scam. They pretend to be employees of the water department, power company, cable TV company, or a home improvement repairman. They use a number of excuses to enter the home such as “we need to inspect your water pipes”, “we need to replace your water meter”, or “may we use your bathroom?”. One suspect attempts to divert the homeowner to a room in the home or outside to examine

needed repairs, while another enters the home and steals cash and jewelry. The imposter burglars may come equipped with all the tools of the trade, wearing hardhats, traffic vests, and using hand-held radios or cell phones while committing the crime.

DISTRACTION BURGLARY

In this scam, transient criminals drive to a targeted area and approach seniors. Sometimes, they follow a senior from the supermarket or other location to their home. One of the criminals rings the doorbell and pretends to be ill, asks for a drink of water, asks if the house is for sale, asks about a previous owner, pretends to be looking for a lost dog, or uses any other excuse to get inside the home. While the senior is distracted, another criminal slips into the residence and steals cash and jewelry.

PREVENTION TIPS

- * Always lock your doors when doing yard work, getting the mail, or anytime you go outside.
- * Never allow strangers inside your home.
- * Home repair contracts should include:
 - the exact price of the work to be done
 - start and end dates
 - the exact work to be completed
 - the name and address of the contractor
- * Be suspicious of contractors that only list a P.O. Box for their address.
- * Don't allow contractors to use scare tactics to get you to sign a contract.
- * Be suspicious of businesses that offer you discount rates due to left over materials from another job or because you are a senior citizen.
- * Beware of unsolicited home repairmen. Never deal with door-to-door contractors.
- * Ask for photo identification from service people

- and call the company to verify their identity.
- *Write down the license plate number and the description of any vehicles the suspects may be operating. They often drive new pick-up trucks with out-of-state license plates.
 - *Get good physical descriptions of individuals who come to your home.

REMEMBER

Scam artists gain your trust by appearing friendly and honest. This is a part of the con. If a deal sounds too good to be true, it's probably a scam!

If you are suspicious, contact your local police department immediately. Don't be embarrassed to file a report if you were victimized. Transient criminals are professionals. Also, contact your local Better Business Bureau, the Pennsylvania Bureau of Consumer Protection at toll-free helpline (800) 441-2555, or see if a contractor is registered with the Pennsylvania Attorney General's Office at (888) 520-6680.

