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Neighbourhood Watch Newsletter



Cannock Chase, Stafford, South Staffs Districts

June – July 2014

Summer Crime Prevention tips

Don't give burglars an easy time

During warm weather we are more likely to leave doors and windows open. The number of sneak-in house burglaries often increases during the summer months, so don't be complacent: If you cannot see the door or window then it should be shut and locked. If you are in the garden, remember to shut and lock all windows and doors on the front of your property.

Peace of mind while you're away

If you are going on holiday, consider taking precautions to make your home look lived in and less attractive to the opportunist burglar.

Use timer switches on lights to make your home look occupied after dark

If possible leave a car in your driveway or ask a neighbour to park their car on your driveway while you're away.

Ask a neighbour to check on your home while you're away and move any post out of sight.

Cancel any regular deliveries such as milk and newspapers.

If you have a lawn cut it before you go away and trim back any bushes or shrubs that burglars could hide behind. If you are going to be away for more than 2 – 3 weeks, ask a friend or neighbour to cut the lawn while you are away.

Consider the security any valuable items usually kept in sheds and other outbuildings. They may be safer locked inside your house while you are away.



Deter bicycle thieves

Make your bike identifiable by marking the frame with your postcode and house number using a UV pen or tamperproof label. Keep details of the frame number, make, model and type of bike along with a photograph.

Register your bike on www.immobilise.com, a free online property database which the police use to check stolen property.

Never leave your bike unlocked – even if you're just popping into the newsagents for a couple of minutes.

The best kind of lock is a quality solid steel D-shaped shackle lock.

Always lock your bike to something solid like a lamp-post or railings, preferably in a public area.

If you have a quick release wheel, take off your front wheel and local it to the frame and back wheel.

If you have a pump or detachable lights, take them with you when you leave your bike.

Make sure you have adequate insurance cover for your bike.

Protect your valuables when you go out in the car

Don't leave valuables in your car – even if you know that the bag on the front seat is empty, a thief may still try their luck.

Remove your Satellite Navigation System and its holder from your car, don't leave it in the glove box, and wipe away any suction markers from the holder.

Remember to shut your windows and sunroof every time you leave your car and double check that doors are locked

Use an approved steering lock and gear clamp.

Set your immobiliser and alarm if you have one fitted.



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Don't be too private

Burglars don't like to be seen, keep hedges and bushes cut back so that they can't give cover to a criminal

Keep hedges and shrubs in your front garden below windowsill height to prevent a burglar having a 'screen' to work behind.

Gravel on paths and driveways helps to deter burglars from approaching because it makes a noise when walked on, and attracts attention

Planting can also help – use prickly plants and shrubs close to vulnerable areas such as windows, fences, boundary walls and drain pipes

Keep garden equipment and tools locked away

Valuable garden equipment, fishing tackle, golf clubs and bicycles are often stored in sheds. Keep your shed securely locked by using a strong hasp and close shackle padlock. Use coach bolts or non-return screws to secure door hinges, hasp and staples.

Always put away gardening equipment, tools and furniture away when you've finished using them. They can be used by a criminal to climb on or to force open windows or doors

Keep your garden fences in good repair and consider having trellis on the top to discourage anyone climbing over.

Make your valuables identifiable

Mark garden furniture and DIY equipment with your postcode and house number. If you have a house name, mark using your post code and the first two letters of the house name.

Photograph valuable garden plants and ornaments to help identify them in the event of a theft.

Check your household insurance covers theft from your garden and outbuildings.

Find out more at www.staffordshire.police.uk – information and advice – burglary

Scams

There are still numerous scams circulating by e-mail, telephone, text message and letter. Whatever the context, scams simply want to trick you into paying them money, for example a 'processing fee' to receive a prize or they want to obtain your bank details (so that they can take your money) for example by asking for details in order to pay in a 'rebate'.

Register with the Telephone Preferencing Service to reduce the number of cold-calling telephone calls.

Register with the Mail Preferencing Service to cut down on personally addresses junk mail, and if you think that you may have been the victim of a scam, report the matter to Action Fraud by telephone on 0300-123-2040 or online at the web site: www.actionfraud.org.uk/reportfraud

Security Check List

- If you have a garden gate do you keep it closed and locked?
- Do you keep your front and back doors locked at all times?
- Are keys kept out of sight away from doors and windows?
- Are sheds, garages and other outbuildings kept locked at all times?
- Do you put away garden equipment after use?
- Are valuables kept away from windows so that passers-by can't see them?
- Are curtains and blinds closed at night so that no-one can see in?
- Do you have outside lights?
- Are your valuables marked with a UV pen (with postcode and house number) or with a forensic marker such as Smartwater and registered on Immobilise?

If you have answered NO to any of the questions, consider making changes to make your property and valuables less attractive to the opportunist thief.



Everyone registered with an e-mail address on OWL should have received an e-mail from the OWL system when they first registered giving them a password to use to visit the OWL web site.

The web site is full of local information and there is a 'my details' tab which opens to show the details of the name address and contact numbers that you have registered on OWL. If you change your e-mail address or any other details, you can amend them yourself by going to the 'my details' page.

If you have lost your password, or have any problems logging onto the OWL web site, contact Ash, details on the last page of the newsletter.

Rural Crime Trends

When you are out and about in our rural areas, please keep an eye out for anything untoward.



Incidents of sheep and lambs being stolen from farmer's fields can occur at this time of year.

Both the electric fences around the perimeter of fields and the batteries and units powering them are unfortunately often targeted by thieves

Metal & plant thefts sometimes occur at rural locations – if you see machinery being moved in the middle of the night please be suspicious!



Make sure that you have Staffs Police non-emergency telephone number stored in your mobile so that if you see anything that you think is suspicious, you can contact the police immediately

Rogue traders

Cold calling rogue traders may knock on your door and pretend to be legitimate builders or gardeners. These callers will try to convince you into having work carried out that you do not need doing and may also charge you extortionate amounts of money for the work once it is done.



You should NEVER agree to have work carried out by someone who has passed your house and told you the work needs doing. Rogue traders may pressure the resident into paying for the work before it is complete and even take them to the bank to withdraw the money to pay them.

If you need work doing around the home or garden, make sure that you get quotes from at least three companies and ask friends and neighbours to recommend a reputable company to you

The only way to make sure that rogue traders do not try to swindle you is to make sure you do not open the door to them, and do not buy goods or services on the doorstep.

If a stranger knocks your door:

- Keep your door shut and locked and use a spy hole or window to see who is there
- Do NOT open the door if you do not recognise or are not expecting a caller
- Avoid keeping large amounts of cash at home
- If you feel that a caller is suspicious, tell the police right away

Thinking of a Barbecue?

At the first sign of a hot, sunny day it has become common practice to wheel out the barbecue. Barbecues can be a lot of fun. It's a good opportunity to hold a social event and is the perfect way to cook whilst still getting outdoors and enjoying the sunshine at the same time. However, wherever there's fire present, there's the potential for danger so it's important to take care to ensure that your fun day in the sun goes off without a hitch.

Barbecue safety tips

- If you haven't got a built-in brick barbecue, make sure the site where you're going to put the barbecue is suitable. It should be stable, level, sheltered and away from people, fences, sheds, trees and other areas which could catch fire.
- Make sure the wind is blowing away from you when you light the fire, and beware loose clothing which could be set alight by the barbecue flames.
- Never move the barbecue once it's lit, and in addition, make sure it's situated near to a water supply which you can use to extinguish it if things get out of control.
- You should never use paraffin, petrol or methylated spirits to light a barbecue.
- If you need to help the barbecue to ignite, only use the recommended type of lighter and follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- When you've finished, do not dispose of the remnants of the charcoal until you're absolutely certain that they have cooled completely. It's a well known fact that even if your barbecue has finished late in the evening, the coals can sometimes still be warm the following morning.
- Many people choose to use gas to power their barbecue to give them more control over their cooking. If you intend using gas cylinders, always check the condition of all the pipes before use and ensure that they are connected properly. Make sure that the barbecue controls and cylinder are fully switched off before changing the cylinder and, if possible, you should always change it outdoors. Never stockpile cylinders, only keep what you require for a particular barbecue day and when you have finished with one, turn the cylinder off before the barbecue controls as this will ensure that any residual gas in the pipeline is used up.

2,000 CARS BEHIND BARS IN STAFFORDSHIRE

Over 2,000 vehicles have been seized by Staffordshire Police officers in the first year of a landmark crackdown on car insurance dodgers.

Cars Behind Bars was instigated by Police and Crime Commissioner Matthew Ellis and has proved popular with people across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

The campaign carried out by Staffordshire Police has seen 2,004 cars, vans, motorcycles, mopeds, lorries and even a tractor seized – with 665 vehicles scrapped – since it was launched in May 2013.

A total of 60 higher value uninsured vehicles have been sold off at auction raising over £35,000 in the last 12 months - with the proceeds going back into local communities in Staffordshire.

Mr Ellis said: “Since its launch a year ago, the crackdown on insurance dodgers has been far and away the most popular thing raised with me by people I’ve spoken to across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

“Over 2,000 people have now had to learn their lesson the hard way thanks to tremendous work by officers from Staffordshire Police. Those who drive without insurance can’t hide in Staffordshire. They are being caught and dealt with by having their vehicles seized and, in many cases, scrapped.

“It’s definitely struck a chord with law-abiding motorists who are hit by rising premiums because of these law-breakers. Why should all pay more because some people don’t pay at all?

“It’s clear that the message is hitting home as the number of insured motorists on Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent roads has risen significantly during the crackdown.”

Some of the vehicles seized since the campaign launched can be viewed at www.staffordshire.police.uk/carsbehindbars

Cars Behind Bars uses Staffordshire’s extensive automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) system that identifies those flouting the law.

Chief Superintendent Jon Drake, from Staffordshire Police, said: “In seconds the ANPR system identifies vehicles that are uninsured, as well as those that have no tax or suspected of being involved in other crimes”.

The fixed penalty fine for people who are caught without insurance was increased nationally from £200 to £300 in August 2013. Motorists also face their car being seized, could be summoned to court and be disqualified, and an endorsement of six penalty points. Drivers re-claiming their car when they have proof of insurance have to pay £150 car recovery costs plus £20 per day storage.

Useful Contact Details

Staffordshire Police Emergency Number

In the case of an emergency call **999**

Staffordshire Police Non Emergency Number 101

For all non-emergency calls. The call handler will transfer you to the most appropriate person to deal with your enquiry.

www.staffordshire.police.uk

The Chase Watch Team

We provide members of Neighbourhood Watch and other Watches with support, guidance and advice:

Ash Connor: Telephone 01785-234129
e-mail:
patrick.connor@staffordshire.pnn.police.uk

OWL (On-line Watch Link): www.owl.co.uk

Staffordshire Fire & Rescue

Non Emergency Number: 08451-22-11-55

For information and advice.

Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Trader Register

Many consumers find it difficult to find a trader they can rely upon. The Trader Register aims to reassure consumers, providing advice and information on employing a trader and working together to get things right first time. The Register covers all aspects of home improvement and repair work, including building, carpentry, external property repairs, decorating and home security. To contact the register please call **01785 330888** between 10am and 4pm or visit the web site at: www.traderregister.org.uk

Action Fraud

Report scams and fraud by calling **0300-123-2040** or visit www.actionfraud.police.uk

Consumer Advice: call 08454 04 05 06 www.adviceguide.org.uk

The Citizens Advice Consumer Service provides practical consumer advice on all kinds of consumer issues from problems with cars to faulty household appliances

Staffordshire Trading Standards:

01785 277888 for free information, advice and assistance to consumers.

Fly Tipping

Report fly tipping to your local council:

Cannock Chase District Council

01543 462621

Stafford Borough Council

01785 619401

South Staffs Council

01902 696000

Preferencing Services

To cut down on telephone cold-calling telephone **0845 070 0707**.

The call must be made from the telephone number receiving the unwanted calls. You can also use this number to reduce the number of unwanted text messages to your mobile phone.

To prevent silent calls from companies using random dialling call **0844-372-2325**

To cut down on personally addressed junk mail, call **0207-291-3310** Allow at least four months before you will see a reduction in the amount you receive.

Staffordshire Trading Standards

**24 hour Rapid Response Team:
0777 379 2252**

They can advise or respond to anyone in the community who thinks that they are being targeted by a rogue doorstep trader. The team are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Crimestoppers: 0800 555 111

To pass specific information about crime or criminals, anonymously, without direct contact with the police.

Cannock Chase District Council 01543-462621

S Staffs District Council 01902-696000

Stafford Borough Council 01785-619000

Immobilise

Register your valuables on the world's largest FREE register of ownership details at: www.immobilise.com

Staffordshire Cares

For information about things to do, help around the home and garden, helpful household gizmos, keeping safe within the community and much more

Call **0300-111-8010**

www.staffordshirecares.info