



Community Crime Prevention Newsletter

Plymouth, MN

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Graffiti

Graffiti is not just an innocent crime that should simply be tolerated. Graffiti can be costly and difficult to remove. In addition, crime tends to increase in neighborhoods where graffiti is allowed to proliferate.

Types of Graffiti

There are 3 basic types of graffiti. The most common type is simple **vandalism**. Vandals spray paint, draw, or otherwise deface property, usually just for fun. The second type of graffiti is called "**tagging**." Taggers feel they gain recognition and status from their peers by placing "tags" in as many places as possible or by painting highly stylized "pieces". Taggers consider their work to be art, but the bottom line is: all graffiti is vandalism. The final type of graffiti is **gang graffiti**. This is a much less common form of graffiti in Plymouth. Gang graffiti is designed to promote a gang, mark a territory, recruit new members or intimidate. It may include letters, symbols or numbers known only by gangs or law enforcement. Gang graffiti is used to convey messages to other gangs.

What to do if you are the victim of graffiti

If you are the victim of any type of graffiti, or you see graffiti in a public area, report it by calling 9-1-1. A police officer will take a report documenting the property damage. Once the graffiti has been reported, remove the graffiti as soon as possible from your property. *Immediately removing graffiti is the most effective way to prevent future graffiti.* Contact a paint expert for questions on how to remove paint from various surfaces. The City of Plymouth's Public Works Department will remove graffiti on city property.

Report suspicious activity

If you see someone doing graffiti, call 9-1-1 immediately! In addition, since most graffiti is done by young people, if you see kids out past curfew, call 9-1-1. The curfew hours are: under 12, home by 9:00 PM weekdays and 10:00 PM weekends; 12-14, home by 10:00 PM weekdays and 11:00 PM weekends; and 15-17, home by 11:00 PM weekdays and midnight weekends.

Night to Unite replaces National Night Out

Plymouth will join other Minnesota communities by celebrating "Night to Unite" on Tuesday, August 4, 2009. The new event will replace National Night Out. The goals are the same: getting neighbors to know one another and creating a strong neighborhood crime prevention network. Neighborhoods participating in the event will not notice any differences, except the name change. Plymouth Police and Fire Departments will continue to register events, offer tips for organizers, visit events and host the annual Kick-Off event at Fire Station 3 the afternoon of August 4th. To learn more about Night to Unite or to register your 2009 event, call 763-509-5198.

Featured Crime Prevention Program: **Project Childsafe**

Help prevent accidental shootings in the home by keeping your guns locked. The Plymouth Police Department offers free firearm safety kits to residents who have firearms in their homes through a partnership with Project ChildSafe. Project ChildSafe, a program developed by the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF), has distributed more than 35 million firearms safety kits throughout the United States since 2003. The Plymouth Police Department has given away over 5,000 of these kits to residents. Each kit contains a cable-style gun lock and safety information. The locks fit most types of handguns, rifles, and shotguns. To request a firearm safety kit, please call 763-509-5147.

Crime Free Multi-Housing Corner:

Carbon Monoxide Alarms

Minnesota State Statue 299F.50 to 51 has established that “every single family dwelling and every dwelling unit in a multifamily dwelling must have an approved and operational carbon monoxide alarm installed within ten feet of each room lawfully used for sleeping purposes.” The law is currently in effect for all newly constructed buildings and existing single family units. The law takes effect for all existing multi-family dwellings on **August 1, 2009**. The Plymouth Fire Department offers Nighthawk carbon monoxide detectors for \$32. These detectors are available to all Plymouth residents, including owners and managers of rental housing! Call 763-509-5198 to order. Don’t wait! Order today!

TRAFFIC TIP Move Over!

If you see an emergency vehicle stopped on the side of the road, you must move over, leaving a full lane for a safety buffer.

Especially for Business

Shoplifting

Shoplifting is a common crime that costs consumers and businesses an estimated \$13 **billion** each year. Shoplifters come from all age groups and from all income levels. There are 2 main types of shoplifters: *professionals* (who steal for a living) and *amateurs* (who steal for a variety of reasons and are usually easier to detect.) Shoplifters usually conceal merchandise on their person, but thefts may also occur by other means, like altering price tags.

Characteristics of Shoplifters

1. Carrying something that can be used to hide items or wearing clothing inappropriate for the weather
2. Seem nervous and don’t want help
3. Watch the staff carefully
4. Frequent restrooms or fitting rooms
5. Cause disturbances or are overly fussy or demanding

Prevention Techniques

1. Greet all customers. Ask, “Can I help you?”
2. Monitor fitting rooms and sales area
3. Keep expensive items locked up
4. Be aware of suspicious activity
5. Prosecute all shoplifters and advertise this policy

Remember, *employees must observe the suspect take merchandise and then pass the last point of sale* before arresting a shoplifter. Once you apprehend a shoplifter, contact police by calling 9-1-1.

Fraud Stop: Typosquatting

Typosquatting is a little known danger lurking on the internet. Typosquatting (which is illegal) is simply a website name that closely resembles an actual website. People become victims of typosquatting by misspelling a word, transposing letters, forgetting to put a “.” after the *www* or before the *com* part of an internet address, or guessing at what a website name may be (example: using *.com*, when the real site is *.net*.) Typosquatting can be obvious – you find yourself on a website that is not where you wanted to be. This can be relatively harmless if the site is used to generate revenue for the scammer (who gets per click advertising when links are clicked.) However, this can be dangerous, if the site links to an adult or unsafe website. Typosquatting can also be hard to detect. Scammers do design sites to closely resemble real websites. The purpose can be identity theft or to upload viruses and other malware onto your computer. Typosquatters can target anyone, from financial institutions to children’s websites. The best way to protect yourself from typosquatting is if you don’t know the address for a website you are looking for, do a search, don’t guess and always remember, if something doesn’t seem right on a website, don’t enter any personal information, click on any links, or download anything.

(Source: Scambusters (www.scambusters.org/typosquatting.html),

Crime Alert: Theft from Auto

Car break-ins continue to be a common crime in Plymouth. Car break-ins can occur anywhere: at home, when shopping, at the park, at the gym, or dropping your child off at day care. Purses, GPS units, laptops, bags, tools, stereos and other electronic equipment are just a few of the commonly stolen items. The most effective way to reduce this crime is to remove all valuables from your car and lock it! Stay safe!

Emergency: **9-1-1**

Non-emergency: **763-525-6210**

Crime Tip Line: **763-509-5177**

If you have any comments about this newsletter, please contact Officer Angela Haseman at the Plymouth Police Department, 3400 Plymouth Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55447, 763-509-5147 or at ahaseman@ci.plymouth.mn.us. Thank you!