

OCEAN CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT

Community Newsletter

2008 Holiday Edition

November 21, 2008

Going Out Of Town? Let Us Know!

Our Residential Security Check module is used to track residential and commercial addresses that require special monitoring. As officers patrol Ocean City, their observations and comments for these locations are captured in our CAD system. When a special watch expires, a detailed report can be generated which outlines the frequency of officer checks and any observations or unique circumstances experienced by officers for that address. More importantly, the security check system provides officers with enough information to quickly contact residents about their property in the event of an emergency.

Residential Security Checks are part of an ongoing effort by the Ocean City Police Department to *target harden* our community against crime. In addition to being a wonderful crime prevention tool, Residential Security Checks promote proactive police-citizen interaction and encourage the sharing of vital information about our community.

You may register for a Residential Security Check by completing the online form or printing the registration form and mailing it to the address listed on the bottom of the form. Residential Security Checks are coordinated by the Ocean City Police Department Public Affairs Office and are completely free of charge. If you have any questions or would like to speak with an officer about this program, please contact
PFC Michael Levy at (410) 723-6665 or
PAS Jessica King at (410)520-5395.

Dear Ocean City community members, residents, family and friends,



The holiday season has quickly approached and as we gear up for the joys that this season will bring, it is important to remember essential instructions for holiday safety and crime prevention. While many of us are focused on holiday shopping, decorating and traveling, it is easy to become vulnerable to thieves and con artists that prey on people during the holiday season.

The Ocean City Police Department is committed to finding proactive ways to keep you informed. Not only do we believe it is our duty to patrol your streets and protect you from crime, but we also accept the

responsibility of providing you with information that will allow you to prevent yourselves from being a victim.

Throughout this newsletter you will find several ways to keep your home, your car, your possessions and your family safe during this holiday season. In addition, you will find several tips on keeping your credit and identity safe.

Also, remember that it is important to report crime or suspicious behavior. We can never be too careful, too prepared or too aware, so if you see something in your community that concerns you, please do not hesitate to give us a call. In addition, share these holiday tips with family, friends and neighbors so that they too are less likely to become a victim of crime. Lastly, I hope that

you have a safe and joyful holiday. It is my sincere hope that 2008 has brought you more fond memories of Ocean City, and has provided you with a sense of pride to be a member of such a wonderful community.

I look forward to another safe year in 2009, and I thank you for the exceptional support and solid partnership you have provided your police. It is because of you, and our community's unwavering commitment to the Ocean City Police Department, that we have been successful in maintaining a safe community for residents and visitors alike.

Have a wonderful Thanksgiving, a Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year.

Be Safe,

Chief Bernadette A. DiPino

Message from the Chief

Thanksgiving Safety Tips You Need For A Happy Holiday

Thanksgiving is a day to spend time with loved ones and reflect on all of the things that we are thankful for. Thanksgiving does not usually present the potential for criminal activity that Christmas does but there are several safety tips to keep in mind in order to prevent a happy holiday from taking a tragic turn.

The kitchen is bound to heat up after a full day of cooking turkey, stuffing and all of the trimmings for a traditional Thanksgiving meal. Be sure to keep children away from ovens and stovetops, as well as hot pots, pans and casseroles. If your children are participating in the holiday preparations, always supervise your younger helpers and keep sharp objects and hot pan handles out of their reach.

Another holiday concern involves depression and stress created by additional family and business responsibilities. Remember, there are only 168 hours a week, managing your time to accommodate a reasonable amount of tasks will greatly help reduce the stress that can accompany the holidays. As a culture we tend to mask the symptoms of depression with increased alcohol consumption. Be aware that this could potentially lead to poor judgment and make it difficult to make sound decisions.

Past holiday seasons have shown an increase in domestic violence incidents. Causes for the increased violence during the holidays include stressors such as financial limits, feeling of isolation, distance from family and friends and substance and alcohol abuse and unrealistic expectations.

If you are experiencing any of these feelings or symptoms or know someone who is, please don't hesitate to get help. Call the Maryland Crisis Hotline at: 1-800-422-0009.

HOW TO PREVENT YOURSELF FROM BEING A VICTIM THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

The holidays are a time when police departments see an increase in crime and thieves and con artists are frequently on the prowl. There are several ways that we can prevent ourselves from being a victim from crime during this holiday season. Here are some tips from the Ocean City Police Department on how to keep your home, your car, your possession and your family safe this season.

Keeping Your Home Safe:

- When leaving your home for an extended time, contact the OCPD to sign up for a Residential Security Check. Also, ask a neighbor or family member to watch your house and pick up your newspapers and mail
- ALWAYS lock the doors and windows of your home, even if you are only gone for a few minutes
- Avoid displaying gifts where they are visible from the outside of your home
- Leave a radio or television on when you leave so your house looks and sounds

occupied

- Arrange to have packages delivered to a neighbor if you are not home to receive them. Packages left on porches and doorsteps are “easy picking” for thieves.
- Don’t leave boxes that contained valuable items on display by the curb waiting for trash pick up
- Make sure to shred all credit applications you receive so they don't fall into the hands of someone who will use them in your name

Keeping Safe While Shopping:

- ALWAYS lock your car and close your windows
- Don’t carry an excess amount of cash
- Only carry credit cards that you will be using and keep cell phones accessible
- Park in a well lit area and have your keys ready when you get to your car
- When approaching and leaving your vehi-

cle be aware of your surroundings

- Do not approach your car alone if there are suspicious people in the area

Keeping Safe While Driving:

- When traveling long distances, make sure that you have had adequate rest. Fatigue is a common cause for car accidents
- **DO NOT DRINK AND DRIVE!!!!!!**
The OCPD will be aggressively enforcing DUI Laws for your safety and the safety of others. Holiday parties are commonly associated with alcohol so have a designated driver, ride the bus or call a taxi cab
- Avoid talking on a cell phone or use a hands free device when talking
- Inspect your vehicle before driving in extreme weather or cold weather. Make sure that your windows have been thoroughly defrosted and do not impair vision for the safety of yourself and other drivers

For more holiday safety tips please contact the Ocean City Police Public Affairs at 410.520.5395.

Protect Your Credit and Keep Your Identity Safe

Identity theft and holiday scams have become a common practice during the holiday season. During the hustle and bustle of holiday shopping, it is critical to take proper precautions to protect your personal and financial information from identity thieves.

If you are purchasing your merchandise with a check, make sure that you are only providing the necessary information required. In other words, your name, address, phone number and drivers license ID are common forms of identification but it is important NEVER give out your social security information.

While online shopping has become a convenient way to avoid the heavy populated malls, it is also a common way that identity thieves can access your personal information. Before making your online purchase, make sure that the site is legitimate and secure. Look for

“https://” rather than the “http://” in your browser window to make sure your information is protected.

Also, there should be a locked padlock image on your browsers status bar. If you are uncertain whether the site is secure, do not provide any personal information.

Be sure to keep your receipts and reconcile your statement so that you can promptly report any discrepancies to your credit issuer.

Also, be cautious of mail, phone (telemarketing) and internet scams. Scammers often prey on the vulnerability, sympathy and generosity of people during the holiday season. Do not give out your social security number, checking account, credit card information or

personal information to an unknown caller. It is important to say NO to anyone who asks for personal information and never assume a friendly voice belongs to a trustworthy person.

Internet fraud usually comes in the form of business opportunities to make money with little effort or cash outlay. Chain letters involving money, get-rich-quick schemes or offers to health and diet claims of scientific breakthroughs or miracle cures should raise your concern for scam. To protect yourself from scams such as these, you should delete any suspicious email without replying.

If you think that you may be receiving email or telephone scams, or that you have been the victim of an identify theft, please contact the Ocean City Police Department's Public Affairs Office.

Phone: 410.520.5395

Email: jking@ococean.com



Ocean City Police Department
Ocean City, Maryland



OPCD Community Updates:



Ending Great in 2008! What's in line for

Another year has quickly passed and as we say goodbye to 2008, we already have a few important dates for you to add to your 2009 calendar.

- **December 1, 2008: Community Outreach Email Program will begin.** The Ocean City Police Department is set to begin a community outreach program that will help keep the community better informed on a variety of police related information. By using a community email list, the OCPD will disseminate press releases and newsletters regarding crime prevention tips, current event information, officer related updates and community training news. If you are interested in enrolling in the Community Outreach Email Program, please visit www.ocpdmd.com to register.
- **December 20, 2008: OCPD Christmas Toy Drive.** (see below)
- **December 31, 2008: New Years Safety Tips & Bus Schedules.** New Years Eve is a popular time for people to be celebrating with family and friends. If you will be drinking alcohol, make sure you have a designated driver or offer to be the designated driver for your family or friends. Also, the Town of Ocean City will be increasing transportation. Please check to see what times the city buses will be running or have a number of a taxi cab on hand. For the safety of yourself and for others, Do Not Drink and Drive
- **January 12, 2009: Officer of the Year Banquet & Officer Award Ceremony.** Each year the Ocean City Neighborhood Watch Association celebrates the hard work and dedication of one distinguished officer.
- **January 30, 2009: OCPD Community Newsletter.** In an effort to keep you better informed, the Ocean City Police Department will be releasing the winter edition of the OCPD Community Newsletter. Topics will include community training information, public safety tools, crime prevention tips, officer related updates and departmental news. In order to cut cost, this newsletter will be disseminated through email only. The OCPD Community Newsletter is a quarterly publication that will enhance the communication between the Ocean City Police Department and the community.

Christmas Toy Drive Set for December 20

The lobby of the Public Safety Building will once again be transformed into a "Winter Wonderland" to make the holiday season special for needy children and their families.

This effort, begun by Chief Bernadette DiPino several years ago, will be organized by members of the OCPD with help from several community organizations and businesses.

The Department is asking for toy donations as well as money to purchase food baskets. Unwrapped, new toys may be brought directly to the Public Safety Building. An account for food baskets has been set up at the Bank of Ocean City. Donations will be accepted at any BOC branch. Please do not bring food to the Department.

The OCPD is also accepting names of children or families that are in need of assistance this holiday season. They must be Ocean City residents or work in Ocean City.

They are asking that all donations be made by Friday, December 19th. The distribution will take place on Saturday the 20th. Members of the OCPD, along with other City employees, will be volunteering their time Saturday to make this day special. They would appreciate the help if anyone else would like to volunteer.

In 2007, The OCPD Christmas Toy Drive had a crew of nearly 50 volunteers and tended to 71 families, including more than 150 children. The police department was fortunate to have received more than 130 bicycles that were donated by various organizations. Volunteers helped families load toys and boxes of food for Christmas.

The Ocean City Police Department also

donates the excess food and toys to the Worcester County Sheriff's Office to help with their community toy drive.

For more information about how you can be involved in the 2008 Christmas Toy Drive, please contact Public Affairs Specialist Jessica King with any questions. She can be reached at 410-520-5395 or via email at jking@ococean.com.

If you, or someone you know, is in need this Christmas, please contact the Ocean City Police Department Public Affairs Office

OPCD Christmas Toy Drive

OCEAN CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

410.520.5395

Participants of the OCPD Christmas Toy Drive must live or work in Ocean City

Children must be 16-years-old or below
Participants must show proof of residence or employment in Ocean City to be qualified