

## Seattle Police Email Community Newsletter

### July 3, 2013



Dear Community Friends,

I often receive great feedback from you regarding the information we send out. Sometimes, I get great information from you that I share with others. In this light, and with her permission, I want to share with you what one of our Block Captains shared with her Block Watch. Thank you, Carolyn Hart!

#### **Safety First When Service Technicians Visit Your Home!**

An incident last week in the neighborhood of SW 112th and Marine View Place SW suggests that a man driving a Comcast truck who does contractual work for Comcast very likely used his position as a contractual worker for Comcast to gain access to a home and scope it out as a possible burglary opportunity, or worse.

Just as you would never ever give your credit card information out over the phone unless you initiated the call, never ever let anyone into your home to perform a service call for your internet or TV or phone service (or any other kind of service) unless you personally initiated the request for service with the company.

Even then, **always ask for identification from any technician who visits your home for any reason, and always ask to see the work-order** before you let someone into your home.

In last week's incident, the technician asked the resident whether she had TV or computer modem service with Comcast (*BIG CLUE: a technician making a legitimate visit should know what services you have with the company they represent!*), then said he was there to "fix a modem problem", so even though the resident hadn't called Comcast to ask for modem service the resident let the guy into her home where he fiddled with some wires and asked inappropriate questions about her working-at-home habits. After the technician's visit (and even during) the resident had a bad feeling about it, so after-the-fact she contacted Comcast and was sickened to learn that no work-order exists in Comcast's system for that technician's visit to her home. By this, one can easily conclude that a technician under contract with Comcast visited her home under false pretenses, and she is now filing a report with Seattle Police Department, and I believe another neighbor in the same cul-de-sac is doing the same.

#### Some additional stuff about Comcast that's helpful to know:

- Comcast's system does have a program that monitors modem performance, and this system does generate work-orders for technicians out in the field to pay "cold calls" to homes in areas where modem-performance is out of sync.
- Comcast contractual workers drive trucks (with the name of the company they are employed by in smaller letters under the Comcast logo).
- Comcast employees drive vans.
- Contract workers and employees both carry Comcast identification.

Any service provider could use false pretenses to gain entry to your home; that's why it's always important to always verify with Comcast (or any service provider) that a work-order for your home exists before you let any service technician into your home or anywhere on your property, and it's especially important to do this when you did not initiate the service call.

In the case above, it's also important to mention that the service technician in this incident was driving a Comcast truck, and I've learned modem-related services calls are made by Comcast employees who drive vans, and that it would be extremely rare for a contractual worker in a Comcast truck to be sent out to provide service to modems.

If you are visited by someone from Comcast claiming to be at your home to fix your modem for which you didn't personally request any service, you can do a couple of things:

(1) You can leave the door closed and tell them to go away because you didn't request a service call but that you'll let Comcast know if you have problems with your modem.

(2) Or, you can ask the technician for their Comcast identification (and take a good hard look at it and memorize the face and name on it (*SPD suggests you write the information down so it will be easier to recall*)), and ask to see a copy of the Comcast work-order order for your home. Then you can ask the technician to wait on the porch (**and then close and lock your door**) while you call Comcast to *confirm* that a work-order does in fact exist in their system for your account/home. At this point, a technician making a *legitimate* service call will wait patiently while you check things out, while a technician making a visit to your home under false pretenses will likely bolt.

If at all possible, get the license number of the technician's vehicle before you make the call to Comcast so you have that information in case you learn that a work-order for service at your home does not exist (and the technician has bolted!), and at that point you definitely need to call 911 to report that a technician using false pretenses tried to gain entry to your home. If the technician is from Comcast, be sure to clarify with police whether the technician was driving a Comcast TRUCK or a Comcast VAN.

Now we all know a little more than we knew before. Be safe, and always report suspicious activity to 911!

Nicely done, Carolyn, I couldn't have said it better.

## **Summer Time Safety**

As we usually see an increase in residential burglaries through open windows/unlocked during this time of year, we wanted to take a moment to send out security tips for the warm weather months. Please share these tips with your neighbors.

### ***Close And Lock Windows; Limit How Far They Can Be Opened***

- Always close and lock windows whenever away from the home. While we understand the desire to ventilate the home when you are not there because of the heat, be aware that you make your home vulnerable and you create an opportunity for the burglar.

### ***Lock Your Doors***

- Install good quality dead bolt locks with at least a 1" throw-bolt on all exterior doors.
- Replace the existing screws in the strike plates with screws that are 3"-4" long. When a door is forced open, it is the jamb that splinters and gives, not the door. By securing the strike plates with 3"-4" long screws, you secure the jamb to the wall stud. When the deadbolt lock is engaged, the bolt goes into the jamb and the jamb is now secured to the framing of the home. This makes it much more difficult for a person to force open a properly locked door.

### ***Working In The Yard***

- If working in the yard in the back of the home, do not leave your front door open and/or unlocked. If you have a garage or storage unit that is out of your line of sight, be mindful of what is in plain view to anyone who may be walking or driving by. Close and lock those doors as well.

### ***Secure Tools and Ladders***

- Secure all tools, including ladders, so they cannot be used to gain entry into your home or that of a neighbor.

### ***If Away For An Extended Period Of Time***

- If you're going to be away for an extended time, ask a friend or trusted neighbor to watch your home. If they see suspicious activity while you are gone, they will know to call 911 for you.
- Have the Post Office hold your mail and hold your newspaper delivery.
- Make it appear that your home is occupied. You can do this by having timers set within the home that will turn lights on and off. You may want to consider timers for your exterior lights or photocell attachments (which activate when it gets dark and go off when it becomes light).

### ***Do Not Leave Personal Belongings Unattended***

- Whether they are in a shopping cart or on a picnic blanket, always maintain positive control over your belongings. Never leave personal belongings unattended in your vehicle. Seattle has a high rate of theft of personal property from vehicles, particularly at public parks.

## **Night Out 2013 is Tuesday, August 6, 2013**

If you have not already done so, Please register your Night Out Against Crime event via our website:  
<http://www.seattle.gov/police/nightout/default.htm>

Thank you for all you do for your neighborhoods. Have a safe and enjoyable Fourth of July!

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