



HALL COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

CRIME PREVENTION UNIT



CRIME PREVENTION BULLETIN

DATE: September 12, 2011
SUBJECT: RESIDENTIAL THEFT SCHEME

With the price of precious metals continually on the continual rise, the market for unwanted jewelry has boomed, which has in turn created a rise in the incidents of jewelry thefts. Some recent residential jewelry thefts have brought to our attention a method that some criminals have been using to gain access to homes. Keep in mind that while these particular crimes have focused on jewelry, any small valuable or prescription medications could be a likely target. Here's how it works:

The criminal approaches an occupied home; sometimes it's even the home of someone they know. They knock on the door and gain admission through some concocted ploy. This could be practically anything, but a recent case involved the suspect stating they were out of gas and needed to use the phone or borrow some gas. While inside the home, the suspect then asks to use the restroom and disappears down the hallway for a time. Unbeknown to the homeowner, the suspect is in the bathroom or an adjacent bedroom, opening drawers and looking for items to steal. Many times the homeowner isn't even aware that they've been victimized until sometime much later.

LESSONS LEARNED:

For starters, if you look outside and see a stranger at your door, we recommend that you first speak to them through the closed door, as opposed to opening it. If someone comes to your home that you might be acquainted with, but you're still not totally comfortable, just politely ask them to wait outside the door while you speak with them. Do not let them in. If they ask to use the phone and you feel compelled to offer assistance, go and retrieve the telephone for them to use while standing there, or go inside to make the call for them while they wait. Don't turn your back on them to walk back into your home without first closing the door, so that it doesn't appear as an invitation for them to come in.

If they ask to use the restroom and you simply can't find a way to say no, proceed with extreme caution. If you're going to let this person into the restroom, first think about what is in that room. If there are valuables or prescription medications in there, either remove them first or just tell them no. If you do grant them access, stand somewhere in plain sight of the door to ensure that they do not go anywhere else in your home. Once they leave the restroom, escort them back to the door. Be wary of any ploy they might use that would get you to leave them unattended in any part of your home.

Be aware that people are not always what they seem. You may think you know Ms. Jane Doe because you've known her mother for years and you used to visit with them while shopping at the grocery store or in the school parking lot, but don't let that brief bit of familiarity lull you into a false sense of trust. Little Ms. Jane Doe may have taken to illicit activity in recent years and be looking to take advantage of you.

Most importantly, if someone comes to your home for any reason and you are suspicious of their presence or behavior, do not let your guard down. Keep them outside, and lock your doors if you feel threatened or vulnerable. If necessary, call 911 so an Officer can respond to make contact with this person and investigate.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:

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