



**FEBRUARY 2011**

## **Quarterly Community Newsletter**

### **A NEW YEAR, A NEW LOOK**

It's a new year. And it's a good time to revisit and reevaluate the safety of how and where we are living. May we suggest you begin by walking across your street and taking a good look at your property – and the house you live in. Does it look cared for? Is there something that needs repair, trimming, cleaning or updating? Does the property look like you care about it?

Now, how about walking up and/or down your street. How do your neighbors' homes look? Could they use a little help? Do you have any empty houses on your street? How bad do they look? Do you think something needs to be fixed? Can you help? Maybe it would be a good time to introduce a Neighborhood Watch Program to your neighbors.

A couple of weeks ago, Jan and her husband went out-of-town to visit her mother. They were away one full day and a half. When they came home, their house was empty. Everything was gone. They went to talk to their neighbors (who they had not previously met) to ask them if they had seen, or heard, anything at their house. Three neighbors said they saw what looked like professional movers carry their belongings out of the house. When the neighbors asked the movers what was going on, they were told the house had been privately sold and Jan and her husband had moved away. Not knowing them, the surprised neighbors accepted the explanation and no one called the police, or even bothered to take the movers' name or description.

This is not something new. Remember last year we reported a similar event, only that time the movers told the neighbors he (the owner) had died and his family had arranged for them to clear the house. It was two weeks later when the neighbors learned that the owner was a female and she had been on vacation.

It's important to know your neighbors. You don't have to be the best of friends – but you should at least know what they look like, their names and telephone numbers. Also, it is wise to let someone locally know if you are going out-of-town, but not in Facebook or other social networks.

**LOOK OUT FOR EACH OTHER.** In Hemet, you can sign up for the Volunteer Vacation Patrol at the Police Department main station or local Police Department Substations.

Like most law enforcement agencies, Hemet Police Department is limited in it's available manpower these days. But, if we all help each other, we can stretch the tax dollars by being eyes, ears and even noses with your involvement in Neighborhood Watch.

### **WHAT IS NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH?**

Neighborhood Watch is a program designed to increase awareness and security in neighborhoods by involving as many individuals and families as possible in a united crime prevention effort.

Participants in Neighborhood Watch learn:

- To be familiar with neighbors and activities on the block.
- To recognize and report suspicious activity.
- To increase home security.
- To take proper inventories.
- To engrave property correctly.
- To communicate with neighbors on a regular basis using block maps, phone trees and by organizing fun activities.

### **WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS TO ORGANIZING YOUR BLOCK WITH NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH?**

- Neighbors get to know one another.
- Neighborhood Watch creates a greater sense of community.
- Neighborhood Watch creates a safer environment in which to live and play.
- When neighbors work together, problems are more easily solved.

### **HOW CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ORGANIZING MY BLOCK?**

Contact the Community Services Bureau, Neighborhood Watch Unit  
Hemet Police Department  
450 E. Latham Avenue, Hemet, CA 92543  
951-765-2415

## **INVENTORY YOUR HOME**

You never know when a disaster may strike your home – but you can be prepared with a home inventory.

A home inventory can help you:

- Buy the amount of insurance you need.
- Get your insurance claim faster.
- Verify losses for your income tax return.
- Keep track of the belongings you've accumulated over the years.
- Make an accurate and complete police report in case of a burglary.

### **GETTING STARTED**

There are many ways to create a home inventory. It may seem hard at first to record information about everything you have in your house and garage, but don't let that put you off. Take one step at a time. First, decide on a way to organize your inventory, a way that works for you. You can do it room-by-room; by category (furniture, electronics, tools, sports equipment, etc.); or from the newest to the oldest; or from most expensive to least expensive.

### **TAKING INVENTORY**

There are different approaches to make your list. You can write everything in a note book. Or, you can take pictures, writing information on the backs of the photos. Or, put the photos and information on your computer. If you have a video camera you can film and describe the contents as you walk through your home and garage. If you have a personal computer, you can download free software at [www.Knowyourstuff.org](http://www.Knowyourstuff.org) that makes creating and keeping a home inventory easy.

Keep all your receipts when they are available and note the cost of the item, when you bought it and information about the make and model.

Expensive items like jewelry and art may need to be insured separately. Ask your insurance agent whether you need a floater for your homeowner's policy.

Store two copies of your inventory in a safe place – one somewhere safe inside your home – and one with a friend, family member or in a safety deposit box. (If your inventory is electronic, store it on a CD or flash drive). With your stored copies you'll be sure to have something to reference in times of emotional distress, flood, fire, earthquake or burglary.

## HOME INVENTORY

You can refer to the following list to help create your inventories.

### **General Appliances**

Televisions  
VCR/DVD player  
Video Camera  
CD player  
Stereo Equipment  
CDs / records  
Radios  
Sewing Machine  
Cameras  
Answering machine  
Phones  
Washer / Dryer  
Air Conditioners  
Heaters  
Fans  
Vacuum cleaner  
Exercise equipment

### **General Household**

Carpet, rugs  
Window treatments  
Bookcases  
Chairs  
Lamps, light fixtures  
Clocks  
Mirrors  
Vases  
Collections (coin, stamp, etc.)  
Pictures/wall hangings

### **Living Room**

Sofa  
Chairs  
Coffee table  
End tables  
Entertainment Center / wall units  
Piano, other musical instruments



### **Dining Room**

Buffet  
Table  
Chairs  
China cabinet  
China  
Silverware  
Crystal  
Table linens  
Tea/coffee sets  
Serving table/cart

### **Bedroom**

Beds  
Bed linens  
Dressers / chests  
Dressing tables  
Night tables

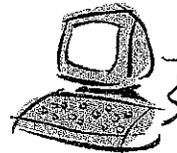
### **Clothing**

Shoes  
Coats  
Furs  
Suits  
Dresses  
Sweaters  
Sports apparel  
Shirts  
Skirts  
Jewelry



### **Kitchen**

Table  
Chairs  
Refrigerator  
Freezer  
Stove  
Microwave oven  
Oven  
Dishwasher  
Coffee makers  
other small appliances  
Pots / pans  
Dishes  
Glasses  
Kitchen utensils



### **Bathrooms**

Hair dryer / other electrical appliances  
Scale  
Shower curtains  
Towels

### **Home Office/ Study/Den**

Desk  
Chairs  
Sofa  
Computer  
Printer  
Scanner  
Fax machine  
Books  
Tables  
Business supplies

### **Garage/Basement/ Attic/Shed**

Furniture  
Luggage/trunks  
Sports equipment  
Toys/outdoor games  
Bicycles  
Small boats  
Trailers  
Lawn mower  
Snow blower  
Shovels  
Sprinklers, hoses  
Wheel barrow - other garden tools and supplies  
Ladders  
Workbench  
Carpentry tools/supplies  
Holiday decorations  
**Porch/Patio**  
Garden chairs  
Garden tables  
Umbrellas  
Outdoor cooking equipment  
Planters  
Jacuzzi

## **ENGRAVE YOUR VALUABLES**

Another very important step a citizen can take to secure their property and discourage burglary and theft is through an engraving program. By permanently engraving a password (you create) on your property you are adding another level of protection. Plus, if your property is stolen, your engraved password will assist officers in tracking down the owners when the property is recovered.

### **Creating A Password**

It seems as if everywhere you go these days, you have to create a password. You need it for e-mail, on-line banking, Facebook, eBay, etc. Keeping track of so many passwords can be a major nuisance.

Time was we would suggest you use your California Driver's License number as a password. **NO MORE!** California Driver's License numbers, just like Social Security numbers are now being used in I.D. theft crimes. **SO, PLEASE DO NOT USE YOUR CALIFORNIA DRIVER'S LICENSE NUMBER OR YOUR SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER AS A PASSWORD.**

We suggest you consider making up a phrase you won't forget or use the name of your favorite TV show, song or book title – shorten the selection to the first letter of each word then add some numbers and/or symbols you can easily recall.

Example: From a statement like, "This Is Our Stuff" create the password **TIOS'365!** . You are telling the world this is our stuff 365 days of the year.

### **Where To Engrave Your Possessions**

- Always mark items in an area not easily seen when looked at by a thief.
- Never display warning stickers unless you have actually marked your property.
- Always keep two records of your property – one in a safe place at home the other in a safe place away from home. If your house burns down, you still have a record elsewhere.

### **Items To Engrave With Your Password**

#### Electronic Equipment:

- Televisions
- VCRs
- DVD Systems
- Stereos
- Video Games
- Cameras
- Camcorders
- Computer Equipment
- Radios

### Sporting Goods:

- Binoculars
- Bicycles
- Motorcycles
- Motor Scooters
- Guns
- Knives
- Bows
- Cross Bows
- Fishing Rods
- Fishing Reels
- Tackle Boxes
- Baseball Bats and Gloves

### Household Items:

- Microwave
- Washer and Dryer
- Toasters & Toaster Ovens
- Bread Ovens & Coffee Makers
- Furniture

### Garage Items and Tools:

- Power Tools
- Hand Tools
- Tool Boxes
- Ladders
- Lawn Equipment
- Lawn Mowers

### Vehicle Items:

- Stereo System
- Radar Detectors
- Battery
- CB Radio
- Hub Caps
- Mag Wheels
- Speakers

### Engrave or Photograph:

- Musical Instruments
- Jewelry and Watches
- Antiques and Silverware
- China

## **LOCAL ALERTS**

The following are reports of events that have recently occurred in our valley. All names, and sometimes gender, used in this newsletter are fictitious and have been changed to protect the innocent.

### **VEHICLE LOCKS**

Kevin drove into the parking lot of a local shopping center. He parked and got out of his vehicle, closed his door, then aimed his vehicle key at the door and pushed the locking button. He heard the door lock – then to his surprise – he heard it unlock. Kevin pushed the button again. And, again he heard the door lock, then unlock. He sighed, "Something must be wrong," he thought, "I'll have to get it looked at." But right now he had to go into the store. When Kevin returned from the store, he found everything inside his vehicle had been ransacked. Some things were missing including his rear view mirror.

A few hours later, Johathan drove into the same parking lot. He parked, got out of his vehicle, closed his door and experienced the same thing Kevin had, except the second time he heard his door unlock – Johathan looked around at the nearby vehicles. He saw three young men in a vehicle watching him. Alert that something might be going

on, Jonathan slowly raised his key and slowly pushed the lock button again. And again, he heard the door lock and unlock. Jonathan had heard there were devices around and available to buyers, that could read codes transmitted to and from all types of locks. Rather than take a chance of something going wrong, Jonathan got into his vehicle and drove out of the parking lot. A wise idea.

We suggest – when you are in a public parking lot, rather than using your electronic buttons to lock your vehicle, lock it manually. Don't send signals other people can capture. Also, don't keep any valuable items clearly visible inside your vehicle.

## **TAILGATES**

Jose was on his way to work. He left his house, locked the front door and walked to the garage driveway to get into his truck. Much to his surprise, when he arrived at his truck he saw the tailgate and his tail lights were missing.

At about the same time, across town, David was doing the same thing Jose was and found the same thing had happened to his truck.

Outdoor theft is a real problem right now – particularly around garages. We recommend, if you can not park your locked vehicle inside your locked garage:

- When you park your vehicle at home, BACK INTO your driveway and stop as close to your garage door as you can.
- Install a motion light on your garage.
- If you drive a truck, buy a tailgate lock and install it, or have it installed.
- If you must park any vehicle outside all night, you might want to buy a locking gasoline tank cover.
- Keep your vehicles looking completely empty at all times.

If the bad guys are going to steal from you, make them work for it.

After David's truck tailgate was stolen, his family installed a driveway security alert system at the front of their home.

## **SECRET/MYSTERY SHOPPER**

Sara got an email, Perry and Derek each received a letter. All three were invited to become a secret Mystery Shopper. All three were offered pay of \$200. Their assignment was to shop at various stores and report on the service and sales procedures. Each received a check for purchases. Sara's check supposedly came from Texas and had a Maryland State address on it. Perry's check was supposedly mailed from Florida, but it had a Canadian postage stamp on the envelope. His check seemed to be a company check written on a bank in Kentucky. Derek's letter also said it was

from Florida, had a Canadian postage stamp on the envelope and the check was written on a bank in Minnesota. Each communication listed three steps. In Step 1 – each was instructed to deposit the enclosed check in their bank account. In Step 2 – Sara was instructed to spend \$75 at Wal Mart. Perry and Derek were given the choice to spend \$75 at Walgreens or Wal Mart, and \$75 at J.C. Penny, Sears or Macy's. In Step 3 – Sara received an email; her instructions were to use the Wal Mart Money Gram services to send them (the employers) a money order cashier's check for \$2,531. Derek and Perry were told to call a telephone number for further instructions. They were told to send a check via Western Union. All, supposedly, so the services could be evaluated.

Neither of them accepted the job. Neither of them deposited the checks. They were all suspicious of fraud. They all called us. We confirmed it was fraud. If they had deposited the checks in their accounts – in 2 to 6 weeks they would have learned the checks were no good. Not only would they have lost the total amount of the check, but they would have had to pay the bounced check fee as well.

Sara wanted to verify our opinion. We suggested she call the FBI to report her email. We also suggested she contact Wal Mart to notify them of what had happened. The FBI verified our opinion. Wal Mart thanked Sara for her message and said they never hired Mystery Shoppers.

## **FROZEN MEAT SALES**

One morning Reggie went to answer his front door bell. Standing on his porch was a nice, clean-cut looking young man, smiling and offering to sell Reggie packages of frozen meat a bargain prices.

You've heard this one before – right? (See our Quarterly May 2009 Newsletter). Apparently they are back in the valley, working the neighborhoods. Let us remind you of a few things you need to ask yourself before you make a decision:

- Can you look at a package of frozen meat and know if it is beef, pork, lamb, horse or dog?
- Can you tell if it's young (prime) or an older, cheaper animal?
- Can you tell how long the meat has been frozen?
- Can you tell if the animal was healthy or sick?
- What about the health conditions at the butcher shop?

It's perfectly legal for people to sell frozen foods door-to-door, provided they are licensed with the Riverside County Department of Environmental Health. The vendors must carry the license and their vehicles must display permit decals. Ask for them and look for the decals before you decide to buy.

For more information call the Illegal Food Programs at (951) 358-5172 or go online at [www.rivcoeh.org](http://www.rivcoeh.org) .

### **CREDIT CARD ALERT**

If you are carrying a credit card that you simply wave at a credit card reader – you do not have to slide it through the reader – we highly recommend you carry that card in a lead lined packet. Anyone carrying a card reader, standing close to you, sitting close to you, even very slowly strolling by you, can read all the information on your credit card.

### **IT'S TAX TIME**

As the tax season begins, most Americans will turn to tax return preparers to help them with one of their biggest financial transactions of the year. That's why the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has implemented new rules to provide greater protection for the estimated 87 million people – about 80% of all filers, who hire preparers or use tax preparation software to file their taxes. As the new rules will help to ensure that taxpayers receive competent, ethical services from qualified professionals, there is no 100% guarantee of safety. There may still be preparers who make mistakes or deliberately manipulate documentation. That is why, we the taxpayers, must be alert and aware, and do our part to oversee what is and what has been done.

Here is what you should keep in mind when getting your tax return prepared:

- Stay away from preparers who claim they can guarantee a large refund.
- Don't pay a preparer a percentage of your refund. Legitimate preparers charge a fee based on the service.
- Make sure the preparer signs your return. A reputable preparer will sign.
- Carefully review your return.

Another problem we face at tax time is identity theft. Although it's important to protect your identity throughout the year, the tax season is one time identity thieves are out in full force, looking to take advantage of Americans who are not safeguarding their personal information. Whether filing online or through regular mail – everyone still needs to be aware of safe filing practices and procedures to protect against ID theft this time of year.

See our February 2010 Newsletter for tips on how to secure your tax records.

## **2-1-1 AT YOUR SERVICE**

In July of 2005, Riverside County residents joined 137 million other Americans across the country who could pick up their telephones to dial – toll free - 211. The 2-1-1 line provides direct access to information about thousands of emergency and social services available in Riverside County. NOTE: 2-1-1 does not replace 911. If you have emergency fire, police or ambulance service needs, call 911. But if you have urgent personal, family or friend needs for social services – call 211 for information and referrals. Trained, caring people will take your call. Their purpose is to link callers in need with those who can help them. Confidentiality is respected. There is no charge.

Some of the services/referrals available for you are:

- Job Training
- Legal Assistance
- Family counseling
- Disability Services
- Domestic Violence Solutions
- Transportation
- Utility Assistance
- Addiction Treatment
- Parenting Resources
- Unemployment Services
- Senior Centers & Services
- Health Care
- Crisis Hotlines
- Housing

and many more.

**If you wish to be removed from our mailing list, please call 951-765-2415.  
If leaving a message: Please speak slowly, spell your name and repeat your phone number.**

HEMET POLICE WANTS TO HEAR FROM YOU

YOU HAVE A QUESTION? WE HAVE ANSWERS

Send your comments, suggestions, questions, or just interesting thoughts to the Hemet Police Department. We might even publish them in a future edition of the Quarterly Newsletter. Reach us at:

**Hemet Police Department  
Neighborhood Watch, R. Moyer  
450 East Latham Avenue  
Hemet, CA 92543**

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(951) 765-2415**

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rmoyer@cityofhemet.org**

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