

News release

30th November 2011

Campaign to reduce burglaries continues over the festive period



SURREY Police's campaign to help homeowners avoid becoming the victims of burglary has launched its second phase today in the run-up to Christmas.

The county normally sees around a 33% increase in domestic burglaries between the months of October and December when the evenings get darker and people are buying lots of expensive gifts to give to their loved-ones.

The campaign includes a short video and radio adverts urging the public to protect their homes and possessions and not to make life easy for burglars by leaving their wrapped presents in view under the Christmas tree.

The video focuses on a conversation between some presents under a Christmas tree discussing a burglary at a neighbour's in which some 'fellow' presents are stolen. It concludes with burglars entering the property to steal them as well, due to their visibility from a window. The radio advertising looks at the views of home owners when they discover they have been burgled and all their Christmas presents have been taken. Actor's voices portray the emotion and upset involved in having a home violated by intruders, while a child actor portrays the impact on younger members of the family.

Alongside the campaign, Surrey Police is planning additional operational activities targeting high risk areas and known offenders. Extra patrols will be out on the beat and free property marking kits using Selecta DNA to mark and protect valuable items will be given away.

A new 10 step self assessment to consider and assess the level of home security will also be available on the forces website. This will provide practical advice to help homeowners reduce the likelihood of becoming a victim of burglary.

In a few weeks time Christmas Cards will also be posted to carefully selected 'friends'. Well known, repeat offenders will be getting a seasonal message from Surrey Police reminding them of the consequences if they re-offend.

Temporary Detective Superintendent Maria Woodall said "I'm delighted with the success of our campaign and operational activities so far. However as Christmas approaches, and we traditionally see an increase in domestic burglaries at this time of year, it is important that simple crime prevention measures are followed in order for homeowners to protect their valuables and Christmas gifts".

"The majority of burglars are opportunists and if they see lots of wrapped presents on show and no one appears to be home they will seize the opportunity. It's best to hide them somewhere safe until Christmas morning. It may not seem that desirable to have an empty space under the Christmas tree but it's a better option than having an empty space under the tree as the victim of a burglary.

“Properties that appear to be unoccupied are more often targeted, and therefore making sure your home looks and feels like someone is at home can be all that is needed to keep your belongings safe - such as leaving a few lights on.”

To help you enjoy a happy and safe Christmas and New Year, Surrey Police recommend the following:

At home;

- Don't leave presents under the Christmas tree in view of a window. Hide them somewhere safe until Christmas morning.
- Security mark expensive presents, such as electronic equipment with a forensic marking product and keep an inventory on a property registration website such as www.immobilise.com.
- Dispose of Christmas gift packaging carefully. Empty boxes left outside can advertise to thieves what they can find inside.

Going away?

- If you are going away over the festive period ask a neighbour or your local Neighbourhood Watch scheme to keep an eye on your house.
- Do not post details of your holiday on social networking sites.
- Make your house look occupied by using automatic timer switches to turn interior lights, radios or TVs on and off and ensure you cancel your milk and newspapers.
- Remember to lock all doors and windows and to set your burglar alarm.

Visit www.surrey.police.uk to view the video or to take the self assessment on your home security.

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