



PENNSYLVANIA STATE POLICE COMMUNITY AWARENESS BULLETIN

CAB 005-17

October 3, 2017

TRANSIENT CRIMINAL SCAM – DIVERSION THEFTS/IMPOSTER FRAUDS

Throughout the year, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania plays host to transient criminals who travel great distances in search of victims for their various money-making scams. In many cases, their targets are the elderly. The greatest defense against these “scam” artists is to share some basic crime prevention tips.

One of the more recent prevalent scams being perpetrated by transient criminals in Pennsylvania is Diversion Thefts/Imposter Frauds. In this scam, criminals approach and distract a homeowner, luring them toward a particular room of the house with ploys such as feigning illness, asking for a drink of water, saying that they are looking for a lost pet, etc. They may also pose as a repairman from the local power company or water department in an effort to gain access to the victim’s house or lure the victim out of the house. They present an identification badge, or may be wearing what appears to be a work uniform, and convince the victim that they need to test the water pressure, electricity, or determine where the property line is. The scammers then advise the victim that company regulations do not allow them to be on the property or in the house unaccompanied. Their purpose is to distract the victim while unseen accomplices enter the residence and steal valuables, such as jewelry and cash. In some instances, the suspects communicate with hand-held radios or cellular telephones while committing these offenses. Some other frequently used ploys include claims that the perpetrator works for a tree pruning service, driveway paving service, or fence installation company.



im·pos·tor

Noun

A person who pretends to be someone else in order to deceive others, especially for fraudulent gain.

Synonyms

Impersonator, masquerader, pretender, imitator, deceiver, hoaxer, trickster, fraudster, swindler

Prevention Tips:

- Always lock your doors when doing yard work, getting mail, or anytime you go outside - both front and back doors.
- Be careful with whom you let in your home. Never allow strangers inside your home, even if they appear to be in distress or with a young child.
- Check with your utility company by telephone if an employee wants to enter your home, or wants you to come outside with them. If you do not see any identification or company credentials, ask for it; however, keep in mind some of these criminals have become skillful at making their own identification cards. Do not hesitate to check each individual’s identification and verify information with their respective company.
- Write down the license plate number of any vehicles that suspicious individuals may be operating. Try to obtain a good physical description of anyone who comes to your door.
- **CALL THE POLICE TO REPORT THE INCIDENT IMMEDIATELY!** Never be too embarrassed to report that you may have been victimized or swindled.