



# PENNSYLVANIA STATE POLICE COMMUNITY AWARENESS BULLETIN

CAB 07-17

December 5, 2017

## PROTECTING HOLIDAY PACKAGES

Experts are predicting over \$100 billion will be spent shopping online during this year's holiday season. As online shopping increases, so do thefts of packages from front porches.<sup>1</sup> According to Consumer Affairs, "an estimated 23 million Americans will have their packages stolen and more than 4,000 customers will file complaints against shipping companies this year."<sup>2</sup> The thefts have increased annually and there are no signs of this trend slowing. Package thieves commonly drive through neighborhoods or walk through apartment complexes looking for delivered items to steal. In some instances, criminals have followed delivery trucks and have stolen delivered packages as soon as the truck pulled away.

Some companies are taking on these thieves by developing programs to combat the activity. Amazon recently tested a new service to its Prime members called Amazon Key. The service will allow delivery drivers to place packages inside the customer's home when they are not there. The service requires the Prime member to purchase a kit that starts at \$250 and includes an Amazon security camera, the Cloud Cam, and a compatible smart lock. When a customer processes their order, they can select the "in-home" option. After the driver arrives at the location, Amazon verifies the address and delivery time and allows him or her into your home. You can watch from your phone as the camera records the entire delivery. Amazon will remotely unlock the door once the delivery driver verifies the package and address. The delivery driver will not have the access code to the lock on the door. The service is originally going to be available in 37 cities, but the company hopes to expand the program. Walmart also announced they are testing a similar service to their customers.<sup>3</sup>



### Recommendations to Avoid Porch Thefts

Remember, you have options to help protect your purchases and deliveries. Before you click ship and send online deliveries straight to your home, think about when the package will be delivered and where you will be at the time. You should also consider how long the package will sit outside in plain sight; whether neighbors will be home at the time of delivery; and whether there is an alternate location that is safe for you to receive your package. Below are some recommendations to help avoid your packages from being stolen by an opportunistic thief.<sup>4,5</sup>

- Consider the use of Smart Package Lockers (if available)
- Have your packages delivered to your workplace (if permitted)
- Install a smart security camera at your front door
- Require a signature upon delivery
- Ask for a tracking number so you can re-route or re-schedule a delivery
- Require a vacation package hold
- Have packages delivered to a local UPS Store
- Put inside lights and radios on timers to give the appearance someone is home
- Get a package guard for your delivery
  - This is a Frisbee size device that is attached to your porch that notifies you when a package is delivered; the device has an alarm to protect your package until you or someone you know can safely pick up your delivery
- Request the packages be delivered to a retail store for pickup
- If you know the date and approximate time of a package delivery, ask a neighbor to pick it up for you
- Leave a note requesting your delivery be placed at the rear of your residence or at another alternate location
- Call 9-1-1 if you see something strange and report the information to authorities with as much detail as possible



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<sup>1</sup> Harte, T. (2017, November 16). Seven tips to protect packages from holiday porch thefts. *Fox 59*. Retrieved 11/20/2017 from <http://fox59.com/2017/11/16/seven-tips-to-protect-packages-from-holiday-porch-thefts/>.

<sup>2</sup> Olivia. (2016, October 11). 8 best guides to avoid getting your packages stolen during holiday. *Reolink*. Retrieved 10/25/2017 from <https://reolink.com/how-to-prevent-package-from-being-stolen-during-holiday/>.

<sup>3</sup> Disis, J. (2017, October 25). Amazon will let delivery people inside your house. *CNN*. Retrieved 10/25/2017 from <http://money.cnn.com/2017/10/25/technology/business/amazon-key-delivery/index.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Package Guard. (2017). *Package Guard*. Retrieved 11/20/2017 from <https://www.thepackageguard.com/>

<sup>5</sup> Moiuszko, S. (2016, December 2). 7 Ways to avoid package theft during the Holidays. *NBC 4*. Retrieved 10/25/2017 from <https://www.nbcwashington.com/news/local/7-Ways-to-Avoid-Package-Theft-During-the-Holidays-404301116.html>.