

## **Annual Crime Prevention Advice**

### **January**

#### **Property Marking**

After Christmas many of us will be lucky enough to have new equipment in the house. This is the ideal time to list the serial numbers of all equipment, both new and old, in the house and in the garden, and register it with Immobilise.com - the national register of property. All police forces look at this register when property comes into their possession either from crime or as lost property. Ideally, property with and without serial numbers should be marked with a DNA property marking system. These products contain a code which is unique to you, and so issues of ownership are easily resolved, giving the police the ability to prosecute criminals more frequently and return lost or stolen property to its rightful owners. The fact that property is identifiable makes the property less desirable and therefore less likely to be stolen. Therefore it should be clearly indicated at the front and rear of your home that your property is marked and identifiable

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### **February**

#### **Car Security**

When it's cold and dark it's tempting to jump out of your car and rush inside to the warm without stopping to remove all the items that you may have in the car, such as satellite navigation systems, phones and laptops, especially if you will be needing them the next day. However, it is important that you take these items inside with you, even if you have parked your car in your own drive and it is alarmed. Criminals like these items as they are easily sold on, and they can remove them within a few moments, frequently causing expensive damage which may cost more to repair than the cost of the items stolen. Your glove compartment should also be left open overnight to allow potential thieves to see that there is nothing hidden inside, as they may break into the car to check.

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### **March**

#### **Stay Out Stranger**

Most people that call at your home will be genuine, but sometimes, people turn up unannounced with the intention of distracting you and tricking their way into your home to steal money or valuables. Always be cautious when someone calls at your door. Check using your spy hole or window to see if you know the person and if you

don't – keep the door shut. It is always best to put the door chain on when first opening the door, even if you think you know the caller. An official visitor will always arrange an appointment with you and will carry identification. If you have a caller at your door who says they are from a company such as the water, electric or gas board, council, police or any other agency, do not take an identification badge at face value. Use the phone book and call the organisation they say they are from to check that they are genuine. An official caller will not mind waiting whilst you do this. If you have any doubts at all do not open the door and call the police.

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## **April**

### **Shed Security**

With brighter days and warmer weather, thoughts turn to the garden and all that needs to be done outside. Garden sheds are particularly vulnerable to thefts, as their structure can be flimsy. Protecting your garden equipment can also increase the security of your home as garden tools can be used to gain access to your property. A good closed shackle padlock, with an alarm if it will be heard, is a good starting point, but it must be secured to a good quality hasp, fitted with a back plate and with the screw heads disabled. Back plates should also be fitted to the door hinges and any brackets, and their screw heads disabled. If your shed has a window, fit some wire mesh on the inside or board it over if it is not necessary. Marking your tools to make them identifiable as yours with bright paint or scratching your postcode on them will make them less desirable to steal. Any equipment with a serial number should be registered with [Immobilise.com](http://Immobilise.com). Chaining large items together makes them difficult to remove. If possible, more expensive items should be stored within a locked garage or inside the home.

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## **May**

### **Beauty Spot Thefts**

We are very lucky in Wiltshire to be surrounded by beautiful countryside and many people spend their leisure time walking the footpaths and public areas available to us all. Mostly people will park at the locality either in designated parking places or in local lay-bys, and the security of your vehicle and its contents is something that should be considered before leaving home. Try to remove anything that you will not need from the car before setting out. Park your car in the most visible and best lit part of any car park, and leave the glove compartment open to show nothing is hidden within. Do not leave items such as bags or coats visible even if nothing of value has been left in them as thieves may break in to check what they contain. Preferably put items in the boot before entering the car park, to avoid people seeing what you are

storing and always make sure electrical items are completely switched off. If you notice anyone acting suspiciously at any time, don't be reluctant to call the police. We would rather check out a false alarm than have to deal with a crime.

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## **June**

### **Holidays**

Holiday time has arrived, and anyone going away from home should take measures to ensure that your home is safe and secure whilst you are not there. Before you go, be careful when cancelling papers and milk, do this by letter and don't talk about going away in public areas such as the local shop or pub. If you are lucky enough to have good neighbours ask them to remove post on a daily basis, and if possible, to open and close curtains morning and evening. If your neighbour is not able, the Post Office operates a 'Keepsafe' service to hold your mail whilst you are away. Having lamps controlled by timer switches is a good way to give the impression that someone is at home. Make sure they go on and off around the house to mimic your daily routine. Don't put your home address on your luggage label, a telephone number will do. Don't leave a phone message giving any indication that you are away. Most importantly of all, before you leave, lock all external doors and windows, including any conservatory ventilation, and set your alarm if you have one.

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## **July**

### **Purse Thefts**

Whether you are on holiday, a day out or just shopping, taking simple measures to protect the possessions you have with you will ensure your day isn't spoilt. The most commonly stolen items are purses and criminals will take them from bags, pockets or trolleys, usually without the owner being aware. Think about what you need before you leave home. It makes sense to only take with you the cash and cards that you will use that day, leaving the rest at home. Never put your pin number with your cards, or keep your house keys in your purse or anywhere that may have your address on. Keeping your purse at the bottom of your bag, the bag zipped up, and holding the bag to the front of your body will all help thwart a thief. Attaching one of the Wiltshire Police purse straps will secure your purse to your bag, preventing thieves from removing it. Remember to be aware of the people around you, especially in crowds, and report any behaviour that you find suspicious.

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## **August**

### **Rogue Traders**

Rogue traders may knock on your door and pretend to be legitimate builders or gardeners. These callers will try to talk you into having work carried out that you do not need doing and may also charge you extortionate amounts of money for the work once it is done. You should NEVER agree to have work carried out by someone who is just passing, or believe them that the work needs to be done at all. If you have agreed for work to be carried out do not let them pressure you into paying for the work before it is complete and do not let them take you to the bank or building society to take out money to pay them. If you think you need work to be carried out at home, make sure that you get quotes from at least three companies and ask friends and neighbours to recommend a reputable company to you. If you have problems with any company doing work for you contact Trading Standards.

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## **September**

### **Back to School**

Most children will be returning to school with new equipment, bags and uniform and it can be an expensive business to replace kit if it is lost or stolen. Making sure that all your child's belongings are indelibly marked with their name, including shoes and trainers, will help reduce misunderstandings around ownership and assist in items being returned should they get lost. Buying high street rather than designer items makes them less desirable to steal and is less likely to cause problems with other children. Many schools have policies around what can and can't be brought into school but if your child is allowed to have a mobile phone at school, make sure it is registered on [Immobilise.com](http://Immobilise.com) and that you keep a record of the IMI number (the 15 digit serial no underneath the battery- can also be viewed by pressing \*#06# on the phone.)

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## **October**

### **Trick or Treat & Fireworks**

In recent years, Halloween has become a major event amongst young people with dressing up, parties and the imported 'Trick or Treat'. It is important to understand the difference between having fun and behaving in an anti-social manner, and to be aware of the dangers that could be met whilst trick or treating. If children are under 14, it is advised that parents or other adults accompany them and that they only call on houses where they know the residents. Older children should not call on people

who display posters asking for NO TRICK OR TREAT. Throwing eggs and other items at houses can, in certain cases, be classed as criminal damage and result in arrest.

Bang after Halloween comes firework night. Fireworks may be pretty when handled by a trained person, but they can cause truly horrific injuries if not handled or used properly. It is an offence for any person under 18 to have a firework in a public place, and for some larger fireworks it is an offence for any person to possess them.

Police will robustly deal with any person breaking the law. There are many well organised community firework events across Wiltshire that provide a fun and safe night out for the whole family.

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## **November**

### **Responsible Drinking**

Everyone likes to go out and have a good time now and again, and usually that involves alcohol in some way. Drinking responsibly is not only better for your health, but it helps to keep you and your possessions safe. Alcohol consumption dramatically increases peoples tendency to risk take, resulting in pedestrian accidents on the roads, assaults in and around licensed premises and sexual behaviour that is later regretted. You are also much more likely to be a victim of theft and assaults if you have consumed alcohol. Know your limits and stick to them. If you are going out in a group one person should be the sober friend who makes sure the rest of the group stay safe. Agree that no-one leaves the group, or goes home alone, and make sure that fares home are kept separate from other money. If you are travelling by taxi, book it in advance and wait for the driver to ask for you by name, never get in a vehicle assuming it is your taxi. Don't walk home alone, and always chose a well lit well populated road, even if it means taking a slightly longer route. And remember, drinking and driving don't mix; even a small amount of alcohol can compromise your reactions and decision making ability so it is best not to drink alcohol at all if you are driving.

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## **December**

### **Christmas**

I may seem like Christmas wasn't that long ago, but a year really has gone by and we will soon all be shopping, wrapping and partying. Although there is much goodwill around at this time of year, burglars and thieves still work and will have no hesitation in stealing your possessions or gifts if they have the opportunity. When you go shopping, try and use a car park accredited with the 'Park Mark'. This means the car

park will have been assessed by Police for good layout and security. Park in a well lit and well populated area. If you return to your car to deposit items before continuing shopping, make sure you place them in the boot and that they are out of sight. If possible move your car to a different position within the car park so anyone watching thinks you have left. When you get home, do not store the items where passers by or callers to the house will see them. It does look nice to have presents round the tree, but try to only put a few low value presents on display and store the rest out of sight. After presents have been opened, be careful about how you dispose of the boxes and packaging gifts came in – don't advertise all your new possessions to thieves by leaving the boxes outside for the dustmen.

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