



" ON THE BEAT "

FITCHBURG POLICE

January 2012

FIGHTING NEIGHBORHOOD CRIME

WINTER VEHICLE TIPS

Give yourself extra time so you don't rush and increase your risk for a crash. Have your vehicle winterized, good tires, ice scraper, warm hat and gloves, blanket and keep the fuel tank full. This will prevent possible gas line freeze and if you are stranded on the road for an extended period of time you can keep the engine on to keep warm. Never leave your vehicle engine running, unattended and unlocked. This is an invitation for someone looking for a quick ride to get in your car and drive away. During the cold winter months, area drivers may be tempted to warm up their cars while they stay warm inside. But cars left running, unlocked, and unattended are quick and easy targets for thieves. National Crime Prevention Council offers the following tips so you won't be left out in the cold: Never leave your car running or the keys in the ignition when are away from it, even for "just a minute." Keep valuables out of sight or in the trunk. Purses, credit cards, and cell phones in plain view only help attract thieves. Always roll up the windows and lock your car, even if it is in your driveway, garage, or in front of your home. Never leave the registration or title in your car. If stolen, it makes it easier for the thief to dispose of your vehicle. It can also make you a target for identity theft. Be alert when approaching your car, have a plan of action, and have your keys in your hand. Check around, under and in your vehicle for suspicious individuals. Immediately leave the scene to get help if you have any concerns for your safety. Only park your car in busy, well-lighted areas. Install a mechanical locking device—commonly called clubs, collars, or j-bars—that locks to the steering wheel, column, or brake. If your vehicle has an alarm or other anti-theft device, use it. Winter is the worst time to have car problems. If the need arises for a tow truck below is a few tips:

- ◆ Use a tow company authorized by your motor club or insurance company
- ◆ Never allow a tow company who just happens upon the scene take your vehicle. Call your own tow or have a law enforcement officer call the tow on your behalf
- ◆ If your vehicle needs to be towed, tow to your home, a dealership or repair shop you authorize
- ◆ Get an invoice, ask tow cost and storage fees upfront before allowing your vehicle to be towed
- ◆ Remove your personal items before the tow
- ◆ If involved in a crash law enforcement will contact a tow for you
- ◆ If your vehicle breaks down on the highway, stay with your vehicle and telephone law enforcement. An officer is happy to respond and assist you.

SCAMS

We still have people telephone the police department to report they have been scammed out of money. If it appears "too good to be true" it probably is. If someone you do not know mails you a check there is a good chance its fake. Many people are conducting financial transactions and giving information over the internet. Be very careful doing this. Many financial fraud scams originate outside the United States making it hard to investigate. A citizen recently was mailed a check, deposited the check and spent the money. Later they were notified by their bank the check was fake and had to pay back the money. This put them in a short term financial crunch. With the start of a new year comes income tax time. Some may be looking to make charitable donations for tax deduction purposes. Be careful who you donate to, get a receipt, don't give credit card numbers out. A tip related to police organizations.

The Fitchburg Police Department DOES NOT solicited money. Tax dollars support the police department. If you receive a telephone call from a police organization or state association wanting a donation ask the who, what, when, where and why question. Your donation is probably going to a state or national organization and your local police department will not receive any of your monetary donation. If you choose to donate DO NOT give a credit card number.

Many families contract for house hold services, maid service, nanny care, window cleaning, and lawn care. These services are day time service when most home owners are at work. It is important to contract with a trusted contractor.

- Ask for references
- Get a referral from a trusted friend or co-worker
- Check the person's background. The Wisconsin Circuit Court web page is public record. Check this site for any history, wcca.wicourts.gov.
- Recently the sale of gold for cash has become very popular. Thieves target jewelry, gold, silver, old coins and electronics. Keep valuables in a fire proof safe or safety deposit box. Record serial numbers and engrave your valuable electronics. Identity theft is a fast growing crime, remember to secure mail, computer passwords, financial statements passports and any documents with personal information. Password protect your computer to prevent unauthorized use.

Never let a stranger in your home to use the telephone or bathroom. Offer to call assistance for the person or the police. A common tactic for daytime burglars is to knock on the door or ring the doorbell. If there is no answer they believe it is safe to break in. If this occurs and a stranger is at your door asking for an unknown person making you feel uneasy or arousing your suspicions, get a detailed description of the person and any vehicle, and contact the police immediately. It is not a problem for an officer to stop and say hello to someone and ask if help is needed, this gives law enforcement an opportunity to investigate.