PENNSYLVANIA STATE POLICE
COMMUNITY AWARENESS BULLETIN
CAB 07-2016
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PACKAGE THIEVES: THE GRINCH'S WHO STEAL CHRISTMAS

As the holiday season approaches, individuals are reminded that unsupervised packages left on porches, in driveways, at apartment doors, and in mailboxes are easy targets for thieves and burglars. With nearly half of all 2015 holiday shopping done online, The United Parcel Service (UPS) estimates it will deliver 630 million packages between Black Friday and New Year's Day. The problem is that when the packages are delivered, it is usually when no one is home, leaving the proverbial window wide open for criminals. According to a report from insuranceQuotes.com, an estimated 23 million Americans have had packages stolen from their homes, a figure only expected to increase with the popularity of online shopping.[1]

Packages are typically delivered via the U.S. Postal Service, UPS or FedEX. Stealing mail from the U.S. Postal Service is a federal crime and carries a potential five-year prison sentence and $250,000 fine.[2] But, if packages are stolen after they are delivered from a private carrier like UPS or FedEx, it is considered property theft.[3] Thieves will often follow UPS and FedEx trucks to homes, wait a few minutes, and then approach the house to steal the package. Most insurance companies have called these thieves "porch pirates," and advise that the packages stolen may be covered under your homeowner's insurance policy.[4] Postal inspectors make nearly 10,000 arrests each year, many for mail theft. Allstate Insurance Company's Holiday Home Hazards poll found that nearly two-thirds of Pennsylvanians have had valuables delivered to their homes when they are not present and eight percent have been victims of package theft.[5]

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Install cameras on the outside of the home.
- Put inside lights and radios on timers, to give the appearance someone is home.
- Empty trash cans are a clear signal that no one is home.[6] Ask a neighbor to return the empty cans to a designated area.
- Request a specific drop-off time and date.
- Sign up for alerts through the delivery service alerting you to when your package is delivered.
- If you know the date and approximate time of a package delivery, ask a neighbor to pick it up for you.
- Have packages delivered to a local UPS Store.
- Make use of modern technology. There are multiple smartphone applications that allow packages to be tracked.
- Call 9-1-1 if you see something strange and report the tip to authorities with as much detail as possible.

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[1] Medina, D. and Fyer, J. (2015, December 11). 'Porch pirates' driving up package thefts this holiday season. *NCBnews.com.* Retrieved on 11/14/2016 from http://www.nbcnews.com/nightly-news/porch-pirates-driving-package-thefts-holiday-season-n478781.

[2] Park, S. (2012, November 30). Christmas gifts stolen from doorstep. *Ksl.com.* Retrieved on 11/14/2016 from http://www.ksl.com/?sid=18298797.

[3] Park, S. (2012, November 30). Christmas gifts stolen from doorstep. *Ksl.com.* Retrieved on 11/14/2016 from http://www.ksl.com/?sid=18298797.

[4] Roberts-Grey, G. (2012, August 28). A Grinch stole my gifts! Common Christmastime crimes typically covered by home insurance. *Insurancequotes.com.* Retrieved on 11/14/2016 from http://www.insurancequotes.com/home/christmas-crimes-insurance.

[5] Guza, M. (2015, November 29). Package thefts can be prevented, police, experts, say. *Triblive.com.* Retrieved on 11/14/2016 from http://triblive.com/news/allegheny/9010842-74/package-ups-delivered.

[6] Vargas, V. (2012, October 25). How to prevent front-porch thefts. *Nbclosangeles.com.* Retrieved on 11/14/2016 from http://www.nbclosangeles.com/news/local/Front-Porch-Mail-Theft-Burglary-Robbery-Crime-OC-Placentia-Cameras-229319881.html.