



Community Resources Team Crime Prevention Alert

10-01

Transient Crime

Each year Baltimore County residents fall prey to scam artists who represent themselves as legitimate contractors. The reality is, these individuals are a type of transient criminal that we see each year in Baltimore County. Although these criminals sometimes target seniors, all citizens should learn to recognize and be aware of these scams. Here is just one example of how these scams are perpetrated:

Home Improvement Scams

These subjects will arrive at your home unannounced, with offers to do different kinds of home improvement work. You may be led to believe they are local contractors who have just finished a job in the area near you, but in reality they are actually transient criminals who travel up and down the East Coast of the U.S. every spring and fall to perpetrate fraud and scams. They will tell you they have building materials left over from a previous job, and/or offer to do repair work to your home or property for a fraction of what an area contractor would charge.

Frequently these subjects will work in pairs trying to gain access to your home to discuss the work. If allowed in, one subject can divert the attention of the homeowner, while the other subject enters the home and creates damage to simulate a problem (e.g., squirting water on an interior wall to give the impression that the roof is leaking), or worse yet burglarizes the home.

Examples of this type of scam are roof repair, exterior painting, driveway repair, free home inspections, etc. Do not accept unsolicited offers to repair your home, and do not pay for any home improvement job before it is completed. Legitimate/licensed contractors do not work this way, they use advertising and referrals. It is not cost effective for them to go door-to-door to solicit work.

Homeowners should always take the time to check workers' references and contact the Better Business Bureau to check the validity of the contractor. If you need work done to your home, ask a neighbor or friend to recommend a reliable local contractor. Finally, never pay up front for work; always pay at the conclusion of the job.

If you have been victimized by this type of scam or have any questions or concerns about this article contact the Baltimore County Police Department's Community Resources Team, Officer Bryan Dietsch @ 410-887-5901 or the Economic Crimes Team, Ms. Debbie Chenoweth @ 410-887-2190.