

Safety and Security Committee
February 12, 2019

I have found these two Safety and Security articles in The Columbia Patch, and have copied them for your information.

Porch Pirates

COLUMBIA, MD — A so-called "porch pirate" was captured on surveillance video this past week in Columbia. Now, the Howard County Police Department has released video from the crime in hopes of identifying the thief and to remind residents to beware.

The theft happened on Wednesday, Jan. 23. A package was taken from a residence in the 10600 block of High Beam Court, according to police.

"Although the holiday shopping and shipping season may be over, residents shouldn't let their guards down," the Howard County Police Department said in a statement on Tuesday, Jan. 29. "Reports of 'porch pirates,' or thieves who steal packages right off your front doorstep, are all too common throughout the year."

Previously, police issued these tips for protecting packages:

- Try to be home when packages are scheduled to arrive.
- Ask a trusted neighbor or friend to take any packages inside if they arrive before you.
- Request the delivery person put the package somewhere it can't be seen from the sidewalk.
- Have the package delivered to your workplace.
- Have your Amazon orders delivered to their lockers at Whole Foods.

Police also suggested getting a doorbell camera or subscribing to the "Neighbors" app, which does not require having a camera of one's own but allows access to other neighbors' videos.

To get the free anonymous doorbell video-sharing app Neighbors, text "HCPD" to 555888.

Anyone who recognizes the [thief in Columbia](#) is asked to call police at 410-313-STOP or email a tip to HCPDcrimetips@howardcountymd.gov.

SCAMS to be aware of

From the Columbia Patch

PIKESVILLE, MD — A recent round of scam calls demanded Social Security numbers or money on gift cards, warn Maryland State Police. Authorities are warning residents about a telephone scam in which the caller cloned a state police number and asked for personal information from people as part of a criminal investigation.

A woman called the Maryland State Police on Feb. 7 to report she had received a call where the phone's caller ID showed "Maryland State Government" and the number 301-475-8955, which is the number for the Maryland State Police Leonardtown Barrack. When she answered the call, the person on the other end told the target she was a suspect in a drug trafficking investigation

and that she needed to provide the caller her Social Security number and other personal information, officials said in a news release.

This bogus call is one of several phone scams recently reported to Maryland State Police. Officials at the Salisbury Barrack say other scams reported include victims receiving calls that threatened arrest or the detention of family members if the victims did not provide money, account numbers or purchase reloadable gift or credit cards

Another tactic had scammers pose a representative of the Internal Revenue Service who made similar threats. State police say victims have had their computers infected with a computer virus and were told to take immediate action in order to salvage the computer, which included purchasing up to \$2,000 in gift cards to pay the company to correct the issue.

The agency's Cumberland Barrack was recently inundated with numerous telephone calls over a scam in which a man or woman claiming to be from the Social Security Administration requested information and threatened to have the police respond to the victim's address to arrest them.

"These scammers are using scare tactics and sophisticated technology to attempt to take advantage of the public," state police said in a news release. "If you are a senior citizen, or have a family member that is a senior citizen, please be aware and ensure they are aware of these scams so they do not fall victim to them."

The Maryland State Police, as well as government agencies like the Social Security Administration or the Internal Revenue Service, would never solicit personal information or services over the phone from a resident. You should never give any personal information over the phone, and only allow a qualified reputable computer technician the ability to repair your computer if it is infected with a virus. Many of these telephone scams are disguising themselves by using local telephone number prefixes.

Anyone who receives such a phone call should hang up and contact their local state police barrack. Callers may remain anonymous.

Taxpayers should know that the IRS doesn't do these things:

- Call to demand immediate payment through a specific method such as a prepaid debit card, gift card or wire transfer. The agency usually contacts taxpayers through the mail about an outstanding tax debt.
- Demand payment without a chance for the taxpayer to question or appeal what is owed.
- Threaten someone with arrest if they don't pay.
- Ask for credit card numbers over the phone.

You can also report certain types of scams and fraud to federal enforcement agencies. Federal agencies usually can't act on your behalf, but they can use complaints to record patterns of abuse. This helps them take action against a company or industry.

Common scams and fraud - Contact the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) or use the Online Complaint Assistant to report various types of fraud, including counterfeit checks, lottery or sweepstakes scams, and more.