



# PARTNERS IN CRIME PREVENTION

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## OPERATION ID—RECOVER STOLEN PROPERTY AND HELP THE POLICE

A recent discovery of a cache of stolen items highlights the importance of marking and inventorying your valuable possessions. In January, Snohomish County Sheriff’s deputies and members of the Snohomish County Auto Theft Task Force recovered numerous guns, ammunition, \$50,000 worth of tools, and precious stones.



Eleven of the 14 guns were identified as stolen. It is unknown if the tools or precious stones could be returned to their rightful owners.

The fact that the deputies and task force members could identify as many of the guns as they did indicates that the rightful owners of the guns took the time to note the serial numbers and maybe took pictures of the guns to help police identify them as stolen.

It can be very difficult for police to determine if someone has stolen property in their possession without a report that the property was stolen. Without that report, police have to assume that any property in the possession of a suspect

rightfully belongs to the suspect. They legally have to make that assumption even if the circumstances tells the deputy that most likely all of the property in a suspect’s possession is stolen.

Items like tools and certain electronics can benefit from engraving your own unique identifier on them.

Note: Throughout the history of Operation Identification police have advised citizens to engrave their items with their driver’s license number. However, in recent years, detectives have noted that thieves have used the license numbers on stolen items for ID theft.

So, take the time to inventory your valuables, mark the items that are feasible (such as tools and electronics) and take pictures.

For more information go to the Snohomish County Sheriff’s Tip Sheet on Operation ID:

<http://sheriff.snoco.org/Documents/Operation%20ID.pdf>



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## 911- YOUR LINK TO EMERGENCY SERVICES

*If you have an emergency or you see anything suspicious call 911. Depending on the circumstances the call taker will send a patrol deputy or a fire unit.*

*When calling 911 remember:*

1. **Remain calm**–  
*Speak slowly and clearly.*
2. **Explain why you are calling**–  
*Describe why you are calling and whether it is still occurring or not.*
3. **Give the address**  
– *Give the exact location/address including street, apartment numbers, floor, etc.*
4. **Give your name and location**–  
*Giving your name helps with an investigation.*
5. **Give your telephone number**–  
*This helps if your cut off or more information is needed later.*
6. **Stay on the line**–  
*Stay on the line until the operator releases you.*

## DIRECTED PATROL– FOCUSING ON THE REPEAT CRIMINALS

If we have any contact with a Sheriff's deputy, it usually is with a patrol deputy. Patrol responds to 911 calls such as assaults in progress, robberies, burglaries, and other calls as they come throughout a shift. Due to limited resources, patrol frequently needs to prioritize calls. They will respond to life threatening calls before complaints about noise. They will go to robberies in progress or burglaries in progress before a theft that is discovered by a homeowner when they come home from work. It may be frustrating for a homeowner to have to wait for a deputy to take a report on a burglary complaint, but the person who needs immediate attention because their life is threatened appreciates the fast response.

Deputies on patrol do not always have the luxury of conducting long investigations. They often are interrupted by the daily flow of 911 calls. However, a unit of the Sheriff's Office does take the time to focus on problem criminals and problem locations to try to keep crime down in the county. That unit is called Directed Patrol.

Directed Patrol focuses on criminals who conduct the most harmful crimes such as burglary, assault and prostitution. It also concentrates on places where these serious crimes occur. By focusing its efforts the unit hopes to reduce these more harmful crimes by

making it more difficult for offenders to conduct the crimes.

The unit analyzes intelligence from several sources to determine just where they should focus their efforts. They look at crime statistics for information on what crimes are happening in the different locations in the county. They may receive tips through the Sheriff's Tip Line and other methods about who has conducted a crime or may have plans to conduct a crime. The Washington State Department of Corrections helps with information on the criminals they supervise. And patrol can also provide information about crimes and criminals they observe during their daily operations.

Directed Patrol is made up of a sergeant, three deputies and a representation from the Washington State Department of Corrections.

Directed Patrol is a Sheriff's Office function that the public may not see in operation. However, we benefit from it's efforts to reduce crime throughout the county.



## ID THEFT- AN INCREASING PROBLEM FOR AMERICANS

ID theft, including credit card fraud, continues as a serious crime all over America. In 2011, there were over 4,800 complaints of ID theft in Washington. This is down from 6,646 complaints in 2009.

All kinds of people commit ID theft, but law enforcement commonly sees two types of groups:

1. Meth addicts develop organized rings of ID thieves to take up different roles such as collectors who steal mail and who break into cars or houses looking for credit card or identification information. The lab operator creates fake documents. Runners try to pass counterfeit checks. Most individuals within the ring are paid in drugs. Meth addicts frequently can do the mundane tasks that are required in ID theft while high on the drug.
2. Gangs will also organize to commit ID theft. They will organize themselves in a similar manner as meth addicts.

In a recent bust of an ID theft factory in Everett, police found computers, laminating paper, card stock, check stock, a laminator machine, identification, checks, and bags of stolen mail. Also found were numerous driver's licenses and other ID's as well as hard drives and other storage devices such as thumb drives and memory chips.

The draw to ID theft may be reduced risk compared to other crimes:

1. ID thieves can make a lot of money compared to other crimes.

2. The punishment is less than other crimes, such as robbery.
3. The risk of detection is less than other crimes.

The easy ways thieves get your information are by stealing mail, breaking into your house, or breaking into your car to take your checkbook, driver's license, or credit cards. Also, ID thieves often steal passwords.

Prevention can be easy:

- Don't leave checks or credit cards in your car.
- Put documents with account numbers in a safe place such as a safe.
- Lock your house.
- Use a locked mailbox.
- Check your credit report and the credit reports of your children.

Some online prevention include:

- Pick good, strong passwords. Don't use the same password for all accounts.
- Be careful of phishing.
- Don't type passwords into public computers (they may have key-stroke loggers).
- Use WIFI encryption.

## ID THEFT- WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE A VICTIM

*If you become a victim of ID theft you can have trouble with your credit and with bills that the ID thieves have created in your name.*

*To minimize the damage to your credit, you need to act in a timely manner. Here are the steps you need to take according to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC):*

1. Place an initial fraud alert with one of the three credit reporting companies.
2. Order credit reports.
3. Create an Identity Theft Report.

*The FTC has an online checklist that helps you through the steps to complete these actions:*

<http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/features/feature-0014-identity-theft>

## MAIL THEFT- A PRIME SOURCE FOR ID THIEVES

Mail theft is closely related to ID theft in that the criminals are looking for cash, checks, and credit cards/credit card account numbers, and Social Security numbers. Mail thieves will use account numbers within 48 hours and often within 2-3 hours. Some forms of check fraud include:

- Forged signatures
- Forged endorsements
- Counterfeit checks
- Altered checks

**Preventing mail theft:** The Post Office recommends the following to make it harder for thieves to steal your mail:

- Never send cash or coins in the mail.
- Promptly remove mail from your mailbox after delivery, especially if you are expecting checks, credit cards, etc.
- If you will not be home when valuable items are expected, ask a trusted friend or neighbor to pick up your mail.
- Have your local post office hold your mail while you are on vacation.
- If you do not receive a check, food coupon or other valuable mail you are expecting, contact the issuing agency immediately.

- Always deposit your mail in a Postal Service mail collection box or mail slot at your local post office or hand your mail to your letter carrier.

- Exchange work and vacation schedules with trusted friends and neighbors, so that you can watch each other's mailboxes (as well as homes).

- If you believe your mail has been stolen, report it immediately to your local postmaster.

The ultimate prevention measure is to have a locking mailbox. Individual locking boxes are available at major hardware stores. For your street or cul de sac, the Postal Service may install locking mail box units (costing \$1,300 to \$1,700). You and your neighbors may need to share the costs. The units come with 8, 12, 13 or 16 locking mail boxes, 1 or 2 parcel lockers and 1 locking outgoing mail slot. Ask your local postmaster about installing a locking mail box in your neighborhood.



### CRIME PREVENTION COORDINATORS

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### SHERIFF'S OFFICE CRIME PREVENTION WEB PAGE:

[http://sheriff.snoco.org/Sheriff\\_Services/Crime\\_Prevention.htm](http://sheriff.snoco.org/Sheriff_Services/Crime_Prevention.htm)

### NEWSLETTER INFO

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If you have questions regarding this newsletter or any articles that appear in it, please contact the editor at [neighborhoodwatch@snoco.org](mailto:neighborhoodwatch@snoco.org)

### TIP LINES



Snohomish County Sheriff's Office: 425-388-3845

<http://www.snoco.org/app/ssh/anonymoustips/>

Crime Stoppers of Puget Sound: 1-800-222-8477