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COMMUNITY E-ALERT BULLETIN

Happy Holidays

The Treasure Island Police Department would like to remind residents to be mindful of internet scams and the increase of “crimes of opportunity” during the Holiday Season. In this very tough economy, fraudulent solicitations and scams will affect many unsuspecting and trusting people. To help protect yourself and loved ones from these types of crimes, we offer the following suggestions and information:

1. Generally, Treasure Island City ordinances prohibit door-to-door solicitation and peddling of services or goods unless authorized by the City. The exceptions to this ordinance include the distribution of religious, charitable, civic or political matter. We recommend that you ask questions and confirm the validity and approval of these organizations before making any donations.
2. If you receive phone calls, postal mail, packages or e-mails from sweepstakes or lotteries in which you are asked to send any amount of money, please do not reply. Legitimate sweepstakes and games of chance do not require the winner to post an earnest or good faith deposit as a processing fee before they process your prize. **REMEMBER, IF IT'S TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE, IT USUALLY IS!** To prevent receiving malicious software (that which will ruin your computer or allow others to have access to your computer files), please do not open any e-mail from unfamiliar senders. If they truly know you, they will know how to contact you.
3. If you are selling any items or services on the internet through such websites as E-Bay or Craigslist, we recommend that you verify funds or use secure processing services prior to completing any transactions. A popular scam involves sending overpayment with a fraudulent check or setting up a fraudulent wire transfer, and requesting that you send overpayment in the form of a cashier's check or a money order. Additionally, scammers will suggest Western Union for payment processing. We recommend that you not use wire transfer services for these types of transactions as they may not be secure or traceable by Law Enforcement. Legitimate buyers will not send overpayment for an item and offer you a fee for your “inconvenience”. **REMEMBER, IF IT'S TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE, IT USUALLY IS!**
4. Keep your vehicles locked and secure, even in your driveway. Remember that a garage door opener is a burglar's key. Do not leave valuables in the vehicle, such as laptop computers, iPods, portable navigation systems, money, vehicle titles or any other documents which have personal information on them. Never leave firearms unattended in motor vehicles. While shopping during the Holiday Season, park your vehicles in well lit areas and keep valuables and shopping bags out of site and locked in the trunk. Leave the parking lot as soon as practical to avoid being confronted by person(s) watching the lot.
5. Over the past several weeks, several Treasure Island residents have received fraudulent phone calls from persons claiming to be “agents” for the Internal Revenue Service. The callers stated to the victims that a warrant for their arrest exists for non-payment of back taxes from a wrongly filed tax return. The caller demanded immediate payment to prevent imminent arrest. Do not provide financial information over the phone at any time. The IRS does not demand immediate payment over the phone. Contact the local St. Petersburg IRS office at (727) 568-2459 to verify the legitimacy of the phone call. If fraudulent activity is verified, contact the Treasure Island Police Department at 727-547-4595 to report the crime.
6. Keep your residence secure at all times. If you are travelling out of the area for the Holidays, we recommend contacting the Police Department for our House Watch Program. Information and forms are available on the City Website at www.mytreasureisland.org. Recall that discarded boxes left outside for trash pick-up announce the content of your home. Either cover or turn inside out any boxes that contained valued merchandise, especially expensive electronics.

If you have any questions or if you think you are the victim of an attempted fraudulent solicitation or scam, please contact the Treasure Island Police Department at 727-547-4595.

The members of the Treasure Island Police Department wish to extend our best wishes for a safe and enjoyable Holiday Season.