

**MARION COUNTY  
SHERIFF'S  
OFFICE**

*Jason Myers, Sheriff*  
[www.co.marion.or.us/so](http://www.co.marion.or.us/so)

**PORCH LIGHT**  
CRIME PREVENTION NEWSLETTER  
FALL • 2011

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9•1•1

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**ConsumerReports tackles SAFETY**

The June-2011 issue of Consumer Reports magazine took a look at a variety of consumer safety issues. They surveyed law enforcement representatives throughout the country for their recommended safety precautions, tested effectiveness of deadbolt locks and conducted a survey of 1,038 homeowners to determine actual behavior. Their results may surprise you. 52% of people from non-metro areas said they *at least occasionally* leave their car outside unlocked. 26% said they *at least occasionally* leave windows unlocked when they are not home. 19% of the people surveyed said *at least occasionally* leave doors at home unlocked when they are out. 11% said *at least occasionally* leave car keys in the ignition when parked. Are you an easy target? Police, experts and especially people who have spent time on the other side of the law are saying you are. Here is some advice you can follow to prove them wrong.

**Safety considerations...**

**Leaving your garage door open.**

In addition to providing access to everything in your garage, the door most likely leads to an interior door and access to your house. That interior door probably isn't as strong as an exterior door. And once a burglar is in your garage, the neighbors can't see him.

**Obscuring your house.** Tall hedges and fences hide windows and doors, giving thieves cover to work.



**Leaving valuables in sight.**

“When we target a house, we would approach the door and look in—the quality of furniture, whatever there was—to give us an idea of how these people spend their money,” says Bob Portenier, consultant and former burglar.

**Advertising a vacation.**

People often don't do anything to make the house look occupied, says Maj. Kurt Phillips of Memphis police department. Lt. John Dzwlewicz suggests this trick: put some inexpensive kid's toys on the lawn. On Facebook, share the news of your trip only after you return.

**Being carefree with keys.**

Leaving keys under the doormat or elsewhere outside the home is a risk that 12% of people in their survey say they

often take. Another 7% said they do it occasionally. And avoid hiding your car keys inside or outside the car. That just makes it easier for thieves to engage in spur-of-the-moment theft.

**Tossing prescription bottles.**

Labels on prescription bottles can contain important information. Remove the labels and shred them. Treat your medical records, benefit claims forms, insurance reimbursements and even medical tests as confidential information, destroy them before discarding.

**Use your alarm.**

43% of people surveyed who had a home alarm system said they “at least occasionally” don't turn it on when they are not at home.

## A Message from Sheriff Myers

This fall issue of PORCH LIGHT, we chose to feature safety information gleaned from the June, 2011 issue of Consumer Reports. Many of the safety suggestions will seem like simple common sense ideas. But whether you consider them simple or ingenious, taking the steps to actually implement the suggestions into your daily routine is the key to maximizing your personal, identity and financial safety. Don't let a *just this one time* behavior result in an opportunity for a criminal.

As our day-to-day lives become inundated with the advances in technology, the number of technologically savvy criminals also increases. We've all heard of identity theft and the devastating effect it can have on a victim's life. Take the time to review the computer-related recommendations and integrate them into your personal security routine.

Hollywood would have us all believe that crime only happens under the cover of darkness. While a nighttime setting may add to dramatic impact, the truth is, just as many break-ins occur during daylight hours. Be sure to secure your home before leaving, regardless of how short a time you anticipate being gone or the time of day.

Consumer Reports also analyzed the effectiveness of door locks. While it is beyond the purview of this Office to recommend specific brands or manufacturers, I encourage everyone to visit Consumer Reports website (listed below)

*...common sense or ingenious?*

and judge for yourself their reported findings on door locks. How does your home measure up?

While not mentioned in the Consumer Reports study, this is a good time to remind all to be sure your house number is clearly and visibly marked on your home.

This is especially important for those who live in the more rural settings of Marion County. Officers have been dispatched to areas where homeowners do not have their house numbers posted. Having to go door-to-door causes serious delay in our response and wastes valuable seconds—seconds that matter in a life-threatening situation.

Safety first,  
*Jason*

*"A crime prevented is much more valuable than a crime prosecuted."*




<http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/home-garden/home-improvement/door-locks/door-lock-buying-advice/index.htm>

## SHEDucation

Many homeowners are still working hard in their gardens and yards. Thieves are also working hard at figuring out ways to get into sheds and garages, as many contain expensive equipment, tools and bicycles—all of which are fast moneymakers. Did you know that thieves very often use your own garden tools to force open a door or break a window to gain entry into your house?

### Top tips to protect your shed or garage:

- Never leave a garden shed or garage unlocked, especially if the garage has a connecting door to the house. A thief who gains access can work on the inner door without being seen.
- Fit strong padlocks to your shed and garage doors. And make sure the doors are solid enough not to be kicked in.
- And what about the hinges? Normal wood screws are very easy to remove, leaving the contents of the shed vulnerable. Spend a little extra and fit carriage bolts instead of wood screws to secure the hinges.
- Lock ladders inside your garage or shed to prevent thieves from using them to reach upstairs windows. If there is no room in your garage or shed, chain and padlock ladders horizontally to a sturdy bracket on an outside wall.
- Consider installing lockable steel boxes in which to store your tools. Anything that takes time to break into will be a deterrent for thieves. 

*Article provided by Crime Prevention of Oregon Association.*

## ...CONTINUED **ConsumerReports tackles SAFETY**

**Watch out for imposters.** The fastest growing scam in the past year has been imposter fraud, according to the latest annual report on consumer complaints from the Federal Trade Commission. Thieves claiming to be someone they are not use Facebook messages, e-mail, phone calls and text messages to persuade people to send money or divulge personal information such as account numbers or Social Security Numbers. Last year 60,000 people reported that they were affected by this form of fraud, up from just 5 cases reported in 2008.

**Learn to parallel park.** Car thieves are becoming more professional. They're stealing new cars by putting them on a flatbed tow truck. Parallel parking hinders access to the front and rear of your car.

**Hide the stuff in your car.** Don't leave valuables visible inside your car. GPS units are less of a magnet these days; cell phones and laptops more so. Holiday gifts are a big target, so don't stack them up in the backseat. Is there a worse move? Yes. Leaving your stuff in the back of a pickup truck.

**Change your PIN.** Make it a habit to routinely change the secret code for your debit card or ATM card. That gives you better protection against thieves or skimming schemes.

**Keep a financial inventory.** Once a year, take out all of the cards in your wallet, make a list of the account numbers and contact information you'll need to cancel the cards if they become lost or stolen. Hide the list in a safe place.

**Change your Wi-Fi password.** If you have a home wireless network, choose the highest-security option. That way your web browsing and financial transactions will be more protected. Go a step further and create your own administrative password rather than rely on a default password supplied by the router.

**Using lazy passwords.** It pays to make the passwords you use tougher to guess. Don't make it easy for hackers. That means never using passwords such as "welcome" or "password." Mix up letters and numbers to make for tougher encryption.

**Falling for Phishing.** The e-mail that contains what looks like a link to your financial institution might be a phony; cyberthieves will record your keystrokes as you enter passwords, giving them access to your accounts. Don't click on such links; type the correct Web address into the browser.

**Running outdated software.** Always run the latest version of your browser, which will probably include better security features. When a software company such as

Adobe, tells you there's an update for your software, pay attention and run the update. Programs such as Flash and Adobe Acrobat are among the most exploited by cybercriminals. Instant-messaging programs and media players are also targets. To make sure software on your computer is up-to-date, run a program such as the free Personal Software Inspector.

### **Personal Finances & Safety Precautions**

**Banking from a public computer.** Keylogging malware that can capture account numbers, passwords and other vital data is a risk that has been linked to use of open Wi-Fi connections and public computers such as those in hotel lobbies.

**Using unfamiliar ATMs.** Thieves have been known to put out-of-order signs on legitimate ATMs and set up nearby freestanding bogus ones that "skim" data from your card. ATMs located inside banks within view of surveillance cameras aren't risk-free, but pose more challenges for crooks installing skimming equipment. Separate your PIN from your ATM or debit card. (Almost 1 in 10 people carry their code with their card.) And use your free hand to shield the keypad when typing your PIN into an ATM or card reader.

**Dropping your guard at gas pumps.** Card-skimming is likely to increase during summer months, especially in vacation areas, so use cash or credit cards at pumps if possible. If you must use a debit card, select the option to have the purchase processed as a credit card rather than typing in your PIN.

**Ignoring your credit or debit cards.** Monitor your accounts at least weekly to spot and report unauthorized transactions as soon as possible. Use services offered by your bank or card issuer that can help protect you, such as an e-mail or text alert if a transaction occurs more than certain amount.

**Abandoning your receipts.** Many transactions leave a paper trail. Don't toss away receipts in the ATM lobby or leave them at the gas pump. Hold onto them until the transactions have cleared your bank account to make sure the totals match. Then shred the receipts if they have any information a thief can use.

**Trashing your bills.** Thieves harvest sensitive data from account statements and other financial documents placed in the trash and use them for ID theft. Shred them first.

