

WATCHWORD

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NEWSLETTER OF THE THANET NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH ASSOCIATION

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A MESSAGE FROM YOUR THANET POLICE DISTRICT COMMANDER

The Christmas period is now behind us and I trust that everyone has had an enjoyable time, taking special care of themselves and their belongings at this time of the year. My staff have been involved in many activities across Thanet throughout the Christmas season. We have had extra patrols out on the streets, especially during the night time to ensure people can socialise safely. As part of this we continued to be involved in a "Hail a Taxi" scheme where extra officers patrolled the key places where crowds gather so we could make sure people got home safely after their night out. If you are planning a night out at any time, make sure you think about how you are getting home. Don't ever drink and drive or get into a car with someone who has been drinking, as it could ruin yours or someone else's life.

Of course we now enter the frantic season of sales and more shopping pressure. In busy shopping precincts don't make it easy for shoplifters. Make sure your purse or wallet are safely secured, and never leave any bags unattended. All of your purchases can also prove a huge temptation to thieves, so remember to keep your doors and windows closed and don't keep items, including satnavs, mobile phones and bags on display in your vehicles. Also dispose of all packaging carefully - as product boxes left outside can indicate rich pickings for criminals. You can find more advice at www.kent.police.uk.

Mitchell Fox

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS/WEBSITES

Neighbourhood & Home Watch Network :
www.mynhw.co.uk

Neighbourhood Watch (Home Office) :
www.neighbourhoodwatch.uk.com

Kent Community Messaging Network :
www.kent.communitymessaging.net

Thanet NW Liaison Office 01843 222214

Neighbourhood Policing Team01843 222265

Crime Reporting - general advice & to report on
line- www.reportacrime.kent.police.uk

In emergency only..... dial 999

To report non-urgent crime01843 231055

To report a crime in complete anonymity.... 0800
555111 or online at www.crimestoppers-uk.org

To contact Kent Trading Standards re doorstep
crime etc.telephone 0845 3450210
or go online www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/kent

For advice on all consumer issues.....
telephone Consumer Direct on 08454 040506
or go online www.consumerdirect.gov.uk

Domestic Abuse/ Violence 0845 603 6813

Fire Safety 0800 9237000

Thanet District Council - telephone 01843 577000
or online www.thanet.gov.uk

Anti Social Behaviour Hotline -01843 577888

Street Lighting -08458 247800

Buy with Confidence :
www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk



FROM THE CHAIRMAN'S DESK

So, Christmas is behind us (never mind, only some 340 odd shopping days left until the next bout!!) and we have embarked on a New Year. Some of us may be considering following the tradition of making resolutions, others may feel less confident of their strength of will and action. Whatever side you lie on, let us all least resolve once again to protect our selves, our property and valuables and to help others do likewise. There is perhaps nothing more frustrating than hearing in the face of repeated warnings and advice of distraction burglaries, poor levels of household security and carelessness leading to burglary, or theft from motor vehicles and a certain gullibility in dealing with the many unscrupulous elements in our society. And, we must never forget that money does not grow on trees and that any offer we receive which seems too good to be true generally is just so. Never give your personal details or bank or other financial information in response to enquiries appearing in your email inbox or over the telephone. Always report suspicious or criminal activity. Carry your handbag or purse close to you with the clasp facing inwards or properly zipped up, and keep these out of sight when shopping. Do not carry large amounts of cash and keep your mobile phone separate from your purse and your keys separate from your credit cards. Cover up expensive jewellery and be discreet. Talking on your mobile phone, wearing headphones or carrying a laptop all show thieves that you have things worth taking. Always keep your car locked, close the sunroof and windows even if you leave it for only a few seconds. Do not leave anything in your car, particularly when it's parked overnight – 68% of thefts from cars occur when they are parked outside the home, whether on the drive-way or on the street. Park in busy or well-lit areas. Chain motor or push bikes and scooters to something fixed, e.g. security rails or ground anchors. Never leave your car keys in the ignition, even at a garage while paying for fuel.

The list of precautions is endless perhaps, and may be regarded by some as somewhat paranoid, but they really amount to nothing more than simple commonsense and we ignore them at our peril.

ROGUE TRADERS

Kent Trading Standards are anxious to remind everyone of the importance of reporting poor trading practices. Such information is vital in order to target their campaign work and to continue efforts to protect the unsuspecting public, particularly the elderly or otherwise vulnerable. Please ensure that you report any of the following to Consumer Direct, tel 08454 040506

- Sales of cigarettes or alcohol to under 18s
- Sales of fireworks to under 18s or outside permitted dates
- Doorstep sellers, eg carpet or rug sellers
- Cold callers who offer to do work on your property, eg driveways, roof repairs, garden or tree work
- Sales of counterfeit or dangerous goods
- Roadside car dealers
- Out of date food sales
- Traders who purport to be private sellers

SCAMS continue to be of growing concern, affecting the many innocent people who fall victim and whose money, time and lives are being stolen by the criminals behind the scams. If you think that anyone stupid enough to fall for a scam deserves to be scammed, think again, the offenders are extremely clever at manipulating and even threatening those who respond and you could oh so easily fall prey to them.

If you receive information about an offer which seems to be too good to be true (and it would usually turn out to be just that!) please consult friends or family before you do anything, or seek advice from Consumer Direct as above.

For further information about the almost unbelievable world of scams, visit the website www.thinkjessica.com.



Terry McCormick, your Watch Liaison Officer and the Liaison Office volunteer team hope that you all had an enjoyable family Christmas, and wish you all the best for a happy and prosperous New Year

Dial 999 only in an emergency or when a crime is in progress

Three Rules For Safe Online Shopping

The internet has transformed shopping all year round – no crowds, no rain and no parking problems. But up to one-third of internet users remain too worried about scams to shop online. There is no need for this if three simple rules are followed.

1. Use Secure Websites

Before you start buying, make sure that you are shopping on a genuine, safe website. First you can use SHOPS SAFE, which has vetted over 4,000 shops and star-rated them according to security, delivery, range of goods and price. Look out also for the Internet Shopping Is Safe (ISIS) logo from IMRG. Around two-thirds of all UK retail websites are ISIS-accredited as safe. GET SAFE ONLINE also recommends that you make sure that you are using the latest version of your internet browser. That way you will have the latest built-in filters designed to spot and weed out many fake websites.

2. Pay Safely

Once you have found the best price on a secure website, make sure that the payment page bears a picture of a padlock and that the web address starts with "https://" (the "s" denoting security). Without these the site is not secure and you should not enter any details. If all is well, then ensure that you pay using a credit card rather than a debit card so that you are protected under the Consumer Credit Act 1974. If you are still worried about divulging bank or credit card details, consider using a prepaid credit card, which will limit the amount of any loss you may incur and which does not have any connection to your bank account or hold any of your personal details.

3. Keep a Record Remember that distance-selling regulations apply to online shopping so that you can return goods for whatever reason within 7 days of receiving them. The retailer then has 30 days to refund the purchase price. Finally, make sure that you keep a record of any online orders. Print out and keep your order confirmation and hold on to receipts and bank statements. That way you have evidence of your order and can check the amount taken from your bank account or credit card.

If you follow the above rules you should not encounter any problems. But do remember that while the internet can help you find a bargain if an offer seems to be too good to be true, it probably is. So when shopping around different sites for an item, check a known reputable supplier's website to get a rough idea of what the price should be.

Be a responsible and considerate driver – Do not cause a crash or become a victim

One third of all crashes on our roads involve vehicles being used for business purposes. While this is disturbing, it makes it clear that the private motorist bears a disproportionate responsibility for road deaths and serious injuries.

In a recent survey 78% of all drivers said that they often feel stressed, angry or anxious when behind the wheel, and 83% admitted to thinking about something other than driving. Human error is a contributing factor in over 90% of road crashes. Apart from completely reckless and dangerous driving, it seems that the cause of many accidents lies in the many stress factors which we regularly encounter in our everyday lives. We therefore owe it to ourselves, our families and fellow travellers to do all we can to avoid such stress. Please do your utmost to bear the following advice in mind.

- plan your journey carefully; do not rely exclusively on any satnav and follow spoken instructions rather than glance constantly at the screen. The onus is on the driver to remain in charge and not become reliant on instructions from a machine which cannot be aware of all road changes or conditions. Your satnav should also be placed carefully so as not to block or obscure your vision (it is illegal for a satnav to be positioned within the sweep of your windscreen wipers).
- allow plenty of time for your journey to avoid rushing.
- clear your mind of any personal or work problems before driving.
- pay full attention to the road and any hazards that you may encounter. Try to expect the unexpected.
- do not let the actions of other motorists get you annoyed. Just remain calm.
- drive at an appropriate speed for the conditions, and always within the speed limit.
- do not drive if you are tired; take regular breaks during long journeys to ensure you can maintain a proper level of concentration.
- do not drive if you are hungry; if you are already en route stop somewhere convenient for a snack.
- turn off your mobile phone before driving so that you are not tempted to use it or become distracted by an incoming call or text message. Talking on a mobile is far more distracting than talking to a passenger; the use of a hands-free facility does not of itself offer much improvement and you can be prosecuted for doing so if you fail to maintain proper control. If you must, make regular stops to pick up any voicemails, but always in a safe place and switch off your ignition. Like drinking and driving, mobile phones and driving do not mix.

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL (KCC) GETTING TO GRIPS WITH FLY TIPPING

Fly tipping as a blight on the environment has been on the increase despite attempts by the authorities to identify and prosecute those responsible. Make no mistake, those responsible are just as criminal as burglars, often deceiving the public into believing that their waste is going to be disposed of legally for the price they have been charged.

The Clean Kent Campaign co-ordinated by KCC has been introducing SmartWater to householders in trial locations in Kent since the end of September. The aim of the project is to further protect householders against rogue traders, and to discourage fly tipping by sending a serious warning to potential and existing offenders. SmartWater incorporates state of the art forensic technology to link tipped waste with the person responsible for its disposal. Each batch of SmartWater is forensically unique, providing an invisible and permanent trace to the waste. This will allow enforcement officers both at KCC and at District level to irrefutably identify the trader responsible for its removal and help to support criminal investigations which could lead to prosecution. It will also provide Clean Kent with the opportunity to recover assets from the offenders under the proceeds of Crime Act – these would include not only physical but also financial assets, including vehicles, with the resulting proceeds being reinvested into the initiative. Research carried out by Kent Fire and Rescue Service has proved that SmartWater's forensic signatures will withstand extensive periods of burning, so that offenders will not be able to cover their tracks by setting fire to fly-tipped waste.

If you are looking to dispose of waste, you should follow the "Duty of Care" legislation using Clean Kent's simple steps to ensure that the trades people you employ are licenced waste carriers. For further information, check the Clean Kent website (www.cleankent.co.uk) or telephone 0845 3450210. Clean Kent has already achieved a reduction of over 61% in fly tipping and is proud to offer this strong deterrent against this unscrupulous activity, and to be the first to offer this service to the people of Kent.



And, don't forget, SmartWater has many other applications, for example in forensically marking your valuables and other goods. Log onto www.smartwater.com.



AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE ABOUT NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH WEBSITES

We particularly recommend the following three websites :

www.kent.communitymessaging.net where you will find a good deal of Kent county and local area information, including the latest crime protection information;

www.neighbourhoodwatch.uk.com, which is the official Home Office site for Neighbourhood Watch and which provides a lot of general NW advice and information and www.mynhw.co.uk, which is the site of the current NW national organisation.

You will also find a great deal of useful information on the Kent Police website www.kent.police.uk, not only of a general nature but also in regard to local police contacts and activity in your local area or ward, including comparative crime statistics

SEEN SOMETHING SUSPICIOUS? REPORT IT, DON'T IGNORE IT