



Ramsey County Sheriff's Office

Bob Fletcher, Sheriff

Neighborhood Watch

Public Safety Services Division – Crime Prevention Unit

1411 Paul Kirkwold Drive • Arden Hills, Minnesota 55112

Phone: 651-266-7339 • Fax: 651-266-7337

www.RamseyCountySheriff.us

Neighbors and Deputies working together for safer communities

Block Captain News – March 2021

National Consumer Protection Week

Looking to protect yourself from fraud, identity theft, and scams? Maybe you're wondering about the best way to use credit, how to shop for a used car, or maximize your security online.

National Consumer Protection Week, Feb 28 – Mar 6, is a time to help people understand their consumer rights and make well-informed decisions about money. Page three of this newsletter touches on some of the topics, visit ftc.gov for in-depth info.

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Civil unrest awareness and preparation

On Monday, March 8, the high-profile court proceedings involving former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin are scheduled to begin in Minneapolis. They are expected to draw people from across the country to the Twin Cities for protests, marches and demonstrations.

The Sheriff's Office has been an active participant of the multiorganizational effort to coordinate public safety activities throughout the metro area. The goal is to protect people, property and free speech during the trial—and prevent the type of destruction that occurred last year when some used the cloak of protest to burglarize and burn businesses. The Sheriff's Office continues to work with our local businesses on plans, preparations and prevention efforts for community safety.

During these times of political instability, social turmoil, and the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to not overreact. Peaceful protests and marches are lawful First Amendment activities, whether scheduled or spontaneous, and the vast majority of protests are peaceful.

Warning issued about carjackings

In mid-February the Sheriff's Office issued a warning in response to an increase in "carjackings" across Ramsey County and the metro area ([news release](#)). These motor vehicle thefts have included unattended vehicles left running, and occupied vehicles where the driver was threatened to leave the vehicle while the thief drove off.

To help prevent carjackings and prevent motor vehicle thefts:

- Stay alert and aware of your surroundings, especially when walking to and from your car.
- Lock your doors and keep your windows up.
- Do not sit in your vehicle for an extended period of time.
- Do not leave your vehicle running untended, especially with children inside.
- Park in a secure, high traffic, and well-lit area.
- Call 9-1-1 if you see anything suspicious or you are concerned for your safety.

Animal Control Corner: Urban Coyotes

The coyote is Minnesota's most abundant large wild predator, and an extremely adaptable wildlife species that can survive well in an urban environment. Contrary to popular belief, coyotes are not nocturnal and will be active anytime – day or night. Coyotes mate in late winter and whelp (birthing) in April or early May. This may lead to increased activity and sightings as they hunt to feed to their pups. The breeding season can also lead to more aggressive males who could view domestic dogs as competition.

While healthy wild coyotes typically avoid people, incidents have been reported in Minnesota and other states of negative encounters. Experts believe these incidents are more likely after a coyote has been accustomed to humans, or after being fed by humans.

Children of all ages should be taught to stay away from any wild animal. In a coyote habitat, small children should be kept under constant supervision. Cats should be kept indoors, and small dogs should be on a short leash when outside. When walking your dog keep it leashed and in sight.

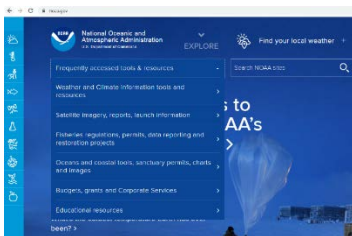
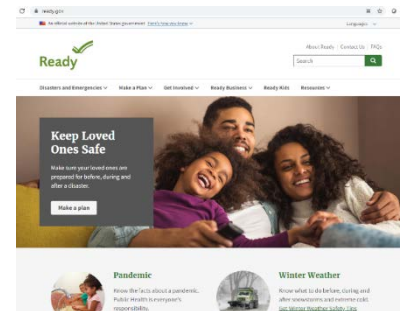
Things to remember:

- Never feed a coyote
- Never run from a coyote
- Never leave small children or pets alone in a coyote habitat
- Keep your yard free of fallen fruit, vegetables and pet food
- Clean up brush piles before rodents move in
- Vaccinate all pets for rabies, distemper, parvo, and other diseases, as recommended by a veterinarian
- If you encounter a coyote that does not immediately run from people, harass it by:
 - Shaking a noise maker, such as a soda can with pennies
 - Make yourself larger by standing and waving your arms
 - Shout in a deep aggressive voice
 - Throw rocks or sticks at the coyote
- If you see a coyote behaving in an abnormal manner call 9-1-1



Disaster readiness

Recently we have seen the impact that weather can have on people's lives. As our local communities coped with the subzero weather we saw the value of systems built for sustainability and resiliency to meet these conditions, while those arctic weather emergencies hit our southern neighbors with loss of life and dire economic impacts provide us with a reminder for preparedness. When disasters happen, whether they are natural or manmade, our survival often is dependent upon our level of preparedness. Awareness is the first step. On the weather front there are seasons that each have potential problems to be prepared for. For example, as we approach Spring in Minnesota, we know there may be floods, major storms and tornados.



There are resources available to help you build your preparedness and survival. Explore multiple topics on [ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov). This website has preparedness plans and ideas for families and businesses. On the weather front [noaa.gov](https://www.noaa.gov), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration offers science and preparation tools in addition to the official government weather forecasts relied upon by many. At the FTC a [Dealing with Weather Emergencies](https://www.ftc.gov/dealing-with-weather-emergencies) web page has information on protecting your

personal information and finances from scammers who use weather emergencies to cheat people.



Awareness is the first step to avoid becoming a victim

Government imposter scams work because they use fear, pose as authority figures, use coercion, pressure for immediate decisions, and other tactics to confuse victims.

Legitimate government agencies do not call out of the blue asking for personal information or payment over the phone.

Avoid these scams by hanging up the phone.

National Consumer Protection Week

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She said it was the government calling. But she wanted my Social Security number. No way.



Tell the FTC at ReportFraud.ftc.gov

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They say I can earn a lot of money being my own boss. But only if I pay them first. That seems wrong.



Tell the FTC at ReportFraud.ftc.gov

Work from home, secret shopper, investment coaching, and other income scams have increasingly raised their ugly heads to take advantage of people who have lost jobs or otherwise suffered during the pandemic.

Some employment scams have used the fake check overpayment scheme - deposit this advance check; use the funds to buy equipment for your new home business from our vendor; keep the rest; and you're out the money when the check finally bounces.

If the deal looks too good to be true ...

Year-round, gift cards are on scammers' wish lists. Scammers always have a reason for you to pay them immediately with a gift card. And they often tell you which card to buy and which store to visit. That's because once those numbers on the back are shared, they have your cash.

Gift cards are for giving - not for making payments. And if anyone, no matter who it is, tells you to pay with a gift card, that's a scam. Stop, don't pay, and then tell the FTC at ReportFraud.ftc.gov.

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The caller told me to buy gift cards to pay up. That's always a scam.



Tell the FTC at ReportFraud.ftc.gov

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I saw an ad for facemasks online. I paid but never got them.



Tell the FTC at ReportFraud.ftc.gov

Thieves follow the headlines when working their schemes to separate unsuspecting people from their money. During times of emergency and scarcities thieves will set up fake websites, send phishing emails and the like claiming access to high demand items.

To avoid fraud; verify the company, the offer and the details such as shipping charges and return policies. Consumer protection laws help everyone be a smart consumer!

Utility scams are snow joke

by Emily Wu
Attorney, Federal Trade Commission

Winter often brings the blues, but when it brings Arctic blasts, burst pipes, power outages, and even icicles indoors, scammers aren't far behind with weather-related scams.

Scammers know severe weather may have shut off your electricity, heat, and water and might pose as your utility company. They might call to say that they're sorry your power went out and offer a reimbursement, but first they need your bank account information. They might email you to say that there's an error in their system, and you have to give them personal information so they can turn your gas on again. They could even threaten to leave your utilities shut off if you don't send them money immediately. But those are all lies.

If you get one of these calls, texts, or emails, here are some things you can do:

- If you get a call, thank the caller and hang up. Never call a number left in a voicemail, text, or email. Instead, if you're worried, **contact the utility company directly using the number on your bill or on the company's website.** Verify if the message came from them.
- If you get a call out of the blue and the caller claims you have to pay a past due bill or your services will be shut off, **never give banking information over the phone.** To pay your bill over the phone, **always place the call to a number you know is legitimate.**
- **Utility companies don't demand payment information by email, text, or phone.** And they won't force you to pay by phone as your only option.
- If the caller tells you to pay by **gift card, cash reload card, money transfer, or cryptocurrency**, it's a **scam.** Every time. No matter what they say.

It's cold out there. Help protect your community by reporting any scams you see at ReportFraud.ftc.gov.

Reminder: April is Distracted Driving Awareness Month. Distracted driving has become a deadly epidemic on our roads. Law enforcement will be placing special focus on distracted drivers throughout Minnesota. Avoid a hands-free violation ticket year-round when you simply 'hang up and drive'.

Neighborhood Watch is about Neighbors and Deputies working together

Involved neighbors are more likely to have open communication lines with each other, deputies, and the whole community. When neighbors know each other's names, normal patterns, and look out for each other, it is likely that they will report any activity that doesn't fit with regular schedules. Involved neighbors look out for each other.

Information sharing on crime prevention, crime trends, and law enforcement issues is a key element to the Neighborhood Watch program of the Sheriff's Office.

Neighborhood Watch program [information and forms](#) to help your block organization are available on the county [website](#). **Please complete and return** the [Block Captain registration form](#) to ensure the Sheriff's Office has your most current contact information. THANKS!



Thank you for working for safer neighborhoods!



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Deputy Mike Servatka
Crime Prevention Specialist
651-266-7339

Randy Gustafson
Crime Prevention Coordinator
651-266-7315

email address: CrimePrevention@co.ramsey.mn.us

website: www.RamseyCountySheriff.us

Remember – when you See Something, Say Something, Call 9-1-1