

ROBBERY AWARENESS

This time of year is traditionally known as the robbery season everywhere, and from what we are hearing this is not shaping up to a grinch-free holiday season for Midtowners either.

1. Within our service area the latest known robbery occurred in a condo complex in the interior of the neighborhood earlier this week. A gentleman was robbed upon arriving home around 9pm. The suspect in that case was described as having dreadlocks - in line with information we published in our latest safety report.

Narrative excerpt from the victim: I got home around 9:05 last night from dinner. As I got out of my car I could not remember if I had checked my mail or not so I decided to walk over to the mailboxes next to the other building. As I was halfway across the parking lot an African American man came from behind the other building, coming up the entrance way. He walked close to the trunks of the cars parked along the retaining wall, which at that point I got the funny feeling, at first I thought it was a dumpster divers since we have so many. I made my mistake by assuming he was homeless and turned my back to get my mail. He then ran up behind me and mumbled something, I turned around and had a gun in my face. I immediately gave him my new pda/cell phone, he looked at me funny took it and put it in his pocket. He then said give me your wallet, which I did. I cannot remember if he ran or walked off. I assume ran. He had on jeans and a tan camo uflage sweatshirt with a hood. The police asked if he had a hat on, and I do not think so. He had an automatic gun gray, or black, it was smooth along the top.

About 30 minutes after the incident the victim's credit card was used at a BP station, then at a McDonald's five minutes later with two transactions totaling \$20 - enough for four value meals. No McDonalds exists in close proximity to a BP within a 30-minute walk of our neighborhood, so the assailant drove or was transported out of our area immediately. There were additional attempts on the stolen credit card but the card was locked by then.

2. This weekend we received word from a contact in Virginia Highland about a robbery incident in the early morning hours of December 1st. According to this report a female robbery victim was being taken away in an ambulance. The report further suggested that there were robberies three nights in a row over there, with emphasis that these subjects were walking alone when they were robbed.

3. Unofficial APD sources tell us that a group of robbers have been making rounds in the intown area. They are looking for a gold Lexus and a black Lincoln, and the incidents seem to be more violent with each incident. One group in a black SUV recently robbed patrons at a restaurant on Myrtle around 10pm.

4. Car break-ins are not decreasing. December has always been a bad month for us, and we expect the same this year. People are still leaving valuables in their cars - that is a large part of the problem! Also, lock your car when getting gas - we often hear about things getting stolen when the customer goes inside while pumping gas.

5. Robbery season is an issue everywhere - not just close to the city center. While the frequency drops off as you move away from urban cores, the criminals in those areas become more sophisticated. So do not let your guard down while shopping for the holidays.

6. This is the season for mail orders. We have noticed an increase of packages on front porches in full view from the street. Vagrants see plenty of opportunity in our neighborhoods right now. Consider having parcels delivered to your work place rather than home.

SEVERE POLICE SHORTAGE IN ATLANTA

A couple good articles have recently appeared in local media outlets.

1. AJC Editor Cynthia Tucker wrote an excellent editorial on the dire need for Atlanta to significantly increase its police force, and specifically that Atlanta should emulate what New York City pulled off to reduce crime and disorder. You can read the editorial entitled "New York's more cops approach is worth emulating" at <http://www.ajc.com/opinion/content/opinion/tucker>

2. Atlanta Magazine wrote an article about neighborhoods like ours being forced to hire off-duty patrols. Read "Safety for Hire" at <http://www.atlantamagazine.com/article.aspx?id=17706>

Atlanta's public safety crisis must become a serious political issue if this city is to move forward. Right now crime is up, and police coverage is stagnating at best. Long gone are the days where police officers actually patrolled their beats instead of bouncing from one 911 call to the next. We are blessed to have a really good patrol coordinator working as our neighborhood cop. This helps us to mitigate the effects of Atlanta's growing public safety crisis. He is helping to bring our neighborhood further along in a number of ways

- Checking out suspicious people on our streets.
- Working closely with neighborhood businesses to help them rid their environments of undesirables.
- Seeking and cleaning out urban camping sites, coordinating police coverage for special problems with APD,
- Making personal visits to members who call with problems
- Recruiting additional patrol officers within our budgetary limits to focus on specific time frames

WHAT WE NEED NOW:

1. We need to increase membership saturation in our neighborhood to give our patrol the best funding possible. Please talk around about the need for what the MPSA does... If you need to renew or join the MPSA please do so now. Also please consider making an extra donation if you have not done so. This can be conveniently done by way of our website.

2. Be extra attentive to the presence of suspicious people. Please be a nosy neighbor (within reasonable limits of course!). For your convenience we have published the *Suspicious and Criminal Activity Infosheet* - you can download this at http://midtownponce.org/news/info/t1_suspect.pdf

CRIME PREVENTION TIPS FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON

'Tis the season to be jolly, but the season also has a bah humbug aspect because of burglars, thieves, pickpockets and other holiday grinchers. Nothing can ruin the holiday spirit faster than becoming the victim of a crime. The Atlanta Police Department has provided a few safety tips that will help you from being a "target" for criminals. **Thanks to John Wolfinger of Virginia Highland for sending us these**

- Remember, whether you are leaving the house to go shopping or out for an evening of holiday parties, lock your doors and windows! Don't leave the drapes open with your presents in plain view. Christmas presents displayed around your tree can be a pretty sight, but can also be quite tempting to burglars. It's better to scatter the gifts around the house, in closets or in the attic, where they can't be so easily seen.

- If you are leaving town for the holidays, make sure your home appears occupied. Leave inside and outside lights on timers and have your neighbors pick up newspapers, mail, and take flyers off your door. Ask neighbors to park in driveway. Put a timer on a talk radio station for several hours a day.
- When you're shopping, use the trunk of your car to keep your packages out of sight. Keep your car locked at all times. Be sure and make several trips to your car to deposit packages in the trunk. Don't allow yourself to become so burdened down with packages that you become a tempting target. When walking through parking lots, be sure that you are aware of your surroundings. Walk with authority. Don't look like a victim!
- If you have a garage door opener, do not leave the control openly displayed in your car. Keep the door leading from your house to your garage locked. Try not to leave your garage door open at any time.
- Be aware that thieves and pickpockets also do some of their biggest business during the holiday season. Ladies, don't dangle your handbag from your shoulder. You are creating a perfect setup for a purse snatcher. Instead, keep your purse tucked tightly under your arm. Better yet, don't even carry a purse. Place your checkbook, cash, or credit cards in your front pockets. Avoid carrying your checkbook, cash, and credit cards all together in one wallet, because if a thief gets the whole package together, they can cash checks with identification and run up a large credit card bill in short amount of time.
- Never give your credit card number over the telephone to anyone when you did not initiate the call. And be sure that you are dealing with a reputable company when ordering merchandise over the telephone.
- If you go to an automatic teller machine, try to go during the daylight hours. If you must go at night, pick a machine that is well lighted and visible to passing traffic. If anyone is lurking near the machine, pass it up and find another.

Just by using a little planning and some good common sense, most holiday crimes can be avoided.

MPSA MAILBAG

Obnoxious chirping noise - *For over 24 hours, we have heard a beeping alarm sound at one of the houses at 7th and Myrtle (on the east side of Myrtle). Can the police or someone investigate? It is a disturbing noise to the neighbors, but more important it could be a real alarm that needs to be looked at. You have to get out of your car to hear it.* **MPSA Response - We immediately dispatched Sgt. Cooper to the vacant house, and yes, there was this chirping noise. He was unable to stop the noise but with the phone number from a for-rent sign on the property we contacted the owner, who arranged for the house to quieten down. There was no sign of any forced entry into the house, as the doors and windows were found to be closed and locked. A follow-up visit the next day confirmed that the chirping noise had ceased. The house was already known to us because a fraternity previously living there generated noise complaints.**

Car break-in - *Two cars were broken into either late Wednesday night or early Thanksgiving morning. My neighbor woke me up 9am in the morning to notify me that my car was broken into. I had decided to leave it out of the garage to get a rain shower cleaning so of course if at all possible put your car in the garage and if you have to leave it outside leave the windows cracked and nothing in the car; absolutely nothing because what you may consider of no value is someone else's treasure (advice from the old time residents). and be sure to file a police report even if you are not filing an insurance claim. I was able to get my glass fixed for under \$200 at Glass Inc. on Glen Iris, if anyone happens to come across such misfortune during the holidays.* **MPSA Note: if this happens to you many glass companies will come to your home or workplace to replace the glass - no need to take the car somewhere and arrange for transportation back and forth. Also, rainy nights are bad nights for car break-ins. Criminals take advantage of the fact that people are less attentive when it is raining.**

Pedestrians are preoccupied with avoiding puddles, and nobody looks out the window to enjoy the rainy day. Also, the rain dampens the sounds, so breaking glass is less likely to be heard. Yes, street criminals are that attentive to details!

NEXT SAFETY MEETING

The Midtown public safety meeting for December will be held this coming Monday (12/10), 7pm, at Mary Mac's.

Our special guest will be Lieutenant William Travelpiece, Commander of the Atlanta Police Narcotics unit. His unit targets mid-level drug dealers. He has been with the Atlanta Police for 19 years, and his his past assignments included Zones 1, 3, and 6, Internal Affairs, Recruitment, Central Investigations, and the Training Academy.

The role of the Narcotics Division is of much interest to us because of the large drug market along Parkway Drive/Boulevard corridor, which in turn drives a great deal of criminal and undesirable activity in surrounding areas including Midtown. Further, this major drug market compounds the extreme levels of vagrant activity affecting our community, and contributes greatly to the public safety crisis in our city.

Also on the agenda:

- Sgt. Cooper will be on hand to give an MPSA Patrol update.
- Sharla Jackson, the Community Prosecutor with the Fulton County District Attorney's Office
- The victim of a recent robbery will share his frightening experience.

We encourage you to come early to enjoy a great dinner and to socialize with your fellow Midtowners!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ONGOING SUPPORT... AND STAY SAFE AND WE HOPE YOU HAVE A GRINCH-FREE HOLIDAY SEASON!

- Your Neighbors at the Midtown Ponce Security Alliance

A VERY SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR CORPORATE AND COMMUNITY SPONSORS WHO PROVIDE A MAJOR ENHANCEMENT TO YOUR PATROL'S EFFECTIVENESS:

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AND THE MANY RESIDENTS AND BUSINESS MEMBERS OF THE MPSA