



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Subject:	News from the Westerville Division of Police		
Releasing Officer:	Lt. Ron McMillin		
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WESTERVILLE EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION SUBSCRIPTION

The Westerville Division of Police reminds residents and other users to sign up for emergency alerts as part of preparation for the winter season. Alerts and notifications are distributed from the Emergency Communications Bureau in the event of true emergencies, such as disaster notification, public safety information and/or alerts pertaining to missing children, hazardous spills and major power outages.

Residents and users may register their contact information and preferences via the website portal: **westerville.onthealert.com**. Commonly known as the “reverse 9-1-1” system, this site is the first opportunity residents have had to self-select and update their contact information.

Secure registration includes options to select phone number preferences (mobile, landline), activate text messaging capabilities and assign a home address for local/neighborhood alerts.

Content is provided by voice message or text, depending on the preferences selected during registration. Subscribers’ information will not be utilized or accessed for any other purpose.

People who work in Westerville but do not live in the city or parents who have children in the Westerville City School District are encouraged to use the system.

THEFTS FROM VEHICLES: “HALT AUTO BREAK-INS TODAY” (HABIT)

Westerville and neighboring communities frequently receive reports of thefts from vehicles. During the approaching holiday shopping season, the Westerville Division of Police reminds residents and visitors to take time to protect personal property in vehicles.

In a recent theft case, an offender entered an unlocked vehicle parked in the victim’s driveway and removed \$25 in coins. The suspect was also able to gain access to the attached garage with the vehicle’s garage door opener. Fortunately, the suspect did not enter the garage or the home.

The HABIT (Halt Auto Break Ins Today) program, first introduced by the department in 2010, provides tips, education and information to prevent thefts from vehicles.

During the holiday season, reserve officers and volunteers expand patrols of area parking lots to help make this a safe and happy holiday season.

It is important to lock and secure your vehicles when they are not in use. Remove anything from your vehicle that could provide an offender access to your home this would include, garage door openers, spare keys to the home and other vehicles, and work badges/fobs with key card access.

Thefts from vehicles are one of the most common crimes in Westerville, and most often happen to unlocked vehicles. Locking your vehicle greatly reduces your chance of becoming a victim of theft.

- Always lock your vehicle when you are away from it, even if it is only for a few minutes.
- Never leave the keys in the ignition or the vehicle running. It is a great temptation to start a car so that it can “warm up” as the temperature drops. This is an invitation to having someone enter your vehicle and steal your personal belongings or, worse, your vehicle.
- Do not leave valuables inside a parked vehicle. Personal items like GPS units, laptop computers, brief cases, purses, cell phones, CD cases, iPods or Christmas gifts are common targets for thieves. Remember, if you can see an item inside your vehicle when you leave it, so can a thief.
- Lock valuables in the trunk, glove box or center console. If you have a van or SUV, use the cargo area cover to conceal them.
- When possible, park in a well-lit area. At home, park in your garage or in your driveway with the windows up and doors locked.

The Westerville Division of Police asks the community to report any suspicious activity in public parking lots or in neighborhoods.

- Call the non-emergency phone line at (614) 882-7444
- Identify yourself by name, address and phone number
- Report the type of crime (burglary, assault, suspicious person, or vehicle, etc.)
- State the location. Be as specific as possible.
- Provide a description of the suspect, whether armed, and how many suspects
- Provide a description of the vehicle, including license plate number
- Provide the direction of travel of the suspect, if applicable.
- Stay on the phone with the dispatcher until they tell you that you may hang up. (Unless you are in fear for your safety)

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