

OFFICE OF CONSUMER PROTECTION

Porch Pirates & Mail Marauders

December 17, 2018

Alert & Tips

Thieves no longer have to come into your home to steal your belongings. They can simply raid your front steps or your mailbox. These following are common scams that happen throughout the year, they can escalate during the holiday season.

Porch Pirates: As consumer habits shift toward e-commerce, deliveries become targeted. [USA Today](#) reported that in 2017, 30% of Americans experienced package theft. “Porch Pirates” are essentially shoplifters who are moving their



theft from the store to your door. While oftentimes these are shipments you ordered, we also [reported](#) how these criminals could be stealing items they ordered in your name (called “hot package” scams).

Tracking the package helps you know where your package is so you could retrieve it as soon as it arrives. In fact, these criminals have been known to follow UPS and FedEx trucks and scoop up packages as they are dropped off. But what about shipments arriving during the work day? The work around is to ship to the office, to a relative you know is home, ship to



Ensuring Integrity in our Marketplace



If you have been a victim of these scams, or if you have any questions about a merchant’s activities, please contact the Office of Consumer Protection.

100 Maryland Avenue
Suite 330
Rockville, MD 20850
Main: 240.777.3636
Tip Line: 240.777.3681
Fax: 240.777.3768

You can also file a complaint online by clicking [HERE](#)



in-store pickups (where available). If you're shopping through Amazon, you could also investigate Amazon Lockers, the Amazon Key Smart Lock Kit, or the Amazon Key In-Car Delivery. Other tips include:

1. Installing a front-door security camera
2. Posting a warning sign
3. Installing a package theft alarm
4. Installing a motion activated spotlight
5. Installing a lockbox for deliveries
6. Scheduling packages to arrive when you are home whenever possible

If you've been a victim of a Porch Pirate, file a claim with the merchant and with the shipping vendor. If you have video of the theft, contact your local police department.



Mail Marauders: County residents are increasingly reporting mail being stolen out of their mailbox. Mail theft is a felony but that is not stopping these criminals.

The reports coming in seem to focus on *outgoing* mail where the flag is raised. The criminals assume that bills are being paid and steal your mail. They then use the checks in those envelopes to create counterfeit checks on your account and then try to cash them. Please note, the thefts can happen for incoming mail too, as these "Mail Marauders" can steal benefit checks, insurance proceeds, etc.

How can you protect your mail? While some suggest not lifting the flag, this can cause confusion as the mail carrier may not know if

you have put in new mail or simply forgotten to pick up yesterday's mail. Speak with your mail carrier about this option before using it. Other tips include:

1. Using the blue mailboxes around town to deposit mail
2. Dropping mail off at the post office
3. Installing in a security camera
4. Getting a P.O. Box for incoming mail
5. Purchasing USPS-approved locking mailboxes from your local hardware store

If you have been a victim of a Mail Marauder, file a report with your local police and the [U.S. Postal Inspector](#).

