

FBI says 'Tis the Season for Holiday Scams

The FBI issued this warning to the general public to be wary of scams during the holiday season.

How to Protect Yourself

With the holidays ramping up and seasonal shopping in full swing, criminals are also gearing up for a busy season. Cyber criminals don't take the holidays off. In fact, they're especially busy trying to steal your money and personal information. Shoppers should be more vigilant than ever for scams designed to steal their money and personal information. Though criminals are often aggressive and creative in their efforts to obtain such money and personal information, there are certain red flags and common schemes holiday shoppers can guard against this holiday season.

Online Shopping Scams

If a deal looks too good to be true, it probably is. Scammers often scheme to defraud consumers by offering too-good-to-be-true deals via phishing e-mails or advertisements. Such schemes may offer brand name merchandise at extremely low discounts or promise gift cards as an incentive to purchase a product. Other sites may offer products at a great price, but the products being sold are not the same as the products advertised.

Steer clear of un-trusted sites or ads offering items at unrealistic discounts or with special coupons. You may end up paying for an item, giving away personal information and credit card details, and then receive nothing in return except a compromised identity. In addition, do not open any unsolicited e-mails and do not click on any links provided.

In addition to securing your banking and credit accounts with strong and different passwords, secure all your other accounts that contain anything of value, such as: rewards accounts, online accounts that save your payment information, or accounts containing your private, personal information.

The emergence and prevalence of secondary markets for airline miles, gift cards, rewards credits, and the like have inadvertently increased the demand for, and resale value of, your stolen information.

Be vigilant when receiving items purchased from online auctions and third-party marketplaces. If an item arrives from some other online merchant, it may have been purchased using a stolen credit card number or stolen rewards points, etc. and then shipped directly to you. Report such cases to both the marketplace where you bought and the merchant who sent it.

Social Media Scams

Beware of posts on social media sites that appear to offer vouchers or gift cards, especially deals that are too good to be true, such as a free \$500 gift card. Some may pose as holiday promotions or contests. It may even appear one of your friends shared the link with you. Often, these scams lead you to participate in an online survey that is actually designed to steal personal information.

In addition, if you purchase or receive theater, concerts, or sporting event tickets as a holiday gift, do not post pictures of the tickets on social media sites. Fraudsters can create a ticket using the barcode obtained from the photo and resell the ticket. Protect ticket barcodes as you would your credit card number, and never display them on social media.

Smartphone App Scams

Be careful when downloading mobile applications. Some apps, often disguised as games and offered for free, may be designed

to steal personal information. Before downloading an app from an unknown source, research the company selling it or giving it away, and look online for third-party reviews of the product. Also, be mindful that alternative app marketplaces available to “jailbroken” or “rooted” devices can potentially include copyright-infringing, stolen content and compromised versions of otherwise trustworthy applications.

Work-From-Home Scams

If you are in need of extra cash this time of year, beware of sites and postings offering work you can do from the comfort of your own home. These opportunities rely on convenience as a selling point for applicants, but often have unscrupulous motivations behind them. You should carefully research the job posting and individuals or company offering you employment.

Protect Yourself

Here are some additional steps you can take to avoid becoming a victim of cyber fraud this holiday season:

- Check your credit card statement routinely. If possible, set up credit card transaction auto alerts, or check your balance after every online purchase to ensure the proper amount was charged to your account. It is important to keep checking your card after the holiday season, as many fraudulent charges can show up even several weeks later.
- If purchasing merchandise, ensure it is from a reputable source.
- Ensure a site is secure and reputable before providing your credit card number online. Don't trust a site just because it claims to be secure.
- Do your research to ensure legitimacy of the individual or company you are purchasing from.
- Beware of providing credit card information when requested through unsolicited e-mails.

- Do not respond to unsolicited (spam) e-mails.
- Do not click on links contained within an unsolicited e-mail.
- Avoid filling out forms contained in e-mail messages that ask for personal information.
- Be cautious of e-mails claiming to contain pictures in attached files, as the files may contain viruses. Only open attachments from known senders. Scan the attachments for viruses if possible.
- Verify any requests for personal information from any business or financial institution by contacting them using the main contact information on their official website.
- Secure your credit card accounts, even rewards account, with strong passwords, change passwords and check your account routinely.
- Be wary when replying to unsolicited e-mails for work-at-home employment.
- Be cautious of exaggerated claims of possible earnings or profits.
- Beware when money is required up front for instructions or products for employment.
- Do not give out your personal information when first interacting with a prospective employer.
- Be leery when a job posting claims “no experience necessary.”
- Be cautious when dealing with individuals outside of your own country.

Who To Contact If You Suspect You've Been Victimized:

- Contact your financial institution immediately upon suspecting or discovering a fraudulent transfer.
- Contact law enforcement.
- Request that your bank reach out to the financial institution where the fraudulent transfer was sent.
- File a complaint with the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint

Center at IC3.gov , regardless of dollar loss. Provide all relevant information in your complaint.

Protection for kids is installed at Davis Field

A local resident reported some hazardous conditions relating to drug use at Davis Field at Lions Park and noted that it was potentially unsafe for children who use the field for soccer practice. To better protect the kids who use the field, the city has installed screens along the existing walls to deter drug use or paraphernalia from being left on the field.

In addition, city parks maintenance workers will conduct a manual foot sweep of the field each day to ensure it is safe for youth sports activities.

Costa Mesa City Council takes a public stand against Proposition 57

The Costa Mesa City Council unanimously passed a resolution opposing Proposition 57 and joined a growing chorus of cities, law enforcement officials and district attorneys who oppose the ballot measure that will reduce prison sentences and allow more opportunities for convicted felons to apply for parole.

[Click here to read the resolution.](#)

Also, in a letter to Gov. Jerry Brown, Costa Mesa Mayor Stephen Mensinger took direct aim at the statewide initiative, which is backed by the governor.

“Proposition 57 will undermine the work that has been put into stopping sexual assault, domestic violence, and human trafficking and weakens legislation protecting victims,” Mensinger wrote. “Important legislation such as the Victim’s Bill of Rights, Mary’s Law, Californians against Sexual Exploitation Act, and the Gang Violence and Juvenile Crime Prevention Act will become weaker if Proposition 57 passes.”

[Click here to read the entire letter.](#)

Costa Mesa joins the League of California Cities, prominent Police Chiefs, District Attorneys and law enforcement agencies and associations throughout the state in ardent opposition to the Proposition 57, which appears on the Nov. 8 ballot.

Like many cities in the state of California, Costa Mesa is feeling the effects of statewide laws and ballot measures that aimed to lessen the prison population but have in turn put more criminals back on the street prematurely.

According the League of Cities, California has experienced increased and sustained property crime in the aftermath of the 2011 public safety realignment and the passage of Proposition 47 in 2014, leading to an increasing number of crimes being treated as misdemeanors, aggravating a pre-existing shortage of beds in county jails, and resulting in an increasing number of offenders being at liberty on the streets of California’s cities.

The league also points to reports in the Los Angeles Times that show violent crime rose in California by 10% in 2015, a figure corroborated by crime statistics maintained by the state’s Department of Justice, which indicate that over 15,000

more violent crimes occurred in California in 2015 than in 2014.

At its Oct. 4 meeting, the City Council voted 4-0 to approve a resolution officially opposing Proposition 57, citing its potential to further increase levels of violent crime.

Residents urged to Sign up for AlertOC to get critical information during emergencies

Because September marks National Preparedness Month, public safety officials are urging residents and businesses to prepare for the many hazards that threaten our daily lives and sense of normalcy – most often occurring in Southern California with little to no warning.

Whether it's wildfires due to the state's extended drought, mudslides, floods or massive earthquakes, disasters occur rapidly, forcing evacuations and road closures to neighborhoods.

AlertOC, the County's mass notification system, is a critical link for residents to immediately learn of any required actions, such as evacuating their homes during an imminent fire.

On Thursday Sept. 22, more than two million Orange County residents will receive a call to test AlertOC.

The drill will replicate a large scale, multi-jurisdictional emergency requiring thousands of numbers to be called simultaneously across Orange County's entire region.

This is the seventh annual regional test of the system and will include 26 participating cities as well as the County's unincorporated areas.

The distinctive feature of AlertOC is the ability for individuals to register multiple contact methods and addresses.

Registrations of cell phone and alternate numbers dramatically increase the ability to reach the greatest number of community members within minutes.

This enables landlines, cell phones and e-mail addresses to be incorporated into a single notification system.

Residents can do their part to prepare for emergencies by registering for AlertOC.

The time is now to self-register cell phone numbers and e-mail addresses to be a part of the regional test.

For more information or to register alternate phone numbers or e-mail addresses, visit AlertOC.com.

**CMPD snares seven offenders
in probation compliance**

operation

Officers from the Costa Mesa Police Department and members of the Orange County Probation Department arrested seven offenders on Thursday Aug. 25 for outstanding arrest warrants, violations of probation, and/or new criminal law violations.

The two agencies conducted the compliance checks on offenders who are subject to Post-Release Community Supervision as well as subjects with probation gang terms. These checks were designed to locate and audit the activity of local criminal offenders residing within Costa Mesa who are under the supervision of the Orange County Probation Department. Officers attempted 19 residential home checks of offenders and contacted 33 offenders, 10 of which were classified as PRCS/Probation offenders living in Costa Mesa.

Summary of those arrested (names withheld):

Male, 15 years old, Costa Mesa

Location of arrest: 1800 block of Park Drive

Supervision status: None

Charges: Armed Robbery (warrant obtained/served on Costa Mesa open case)

Female, 33 years old, Costa Mesa

Location of arrest: 3000 block of Fillmore Way

Supervision: Probation – PRCS

Charges: Probation Violation

Male, 49 years old, Costa Mesa

Location of arrest: 300 block of Princeton Street

Supervision: Mandatory Supervision

Charges: Probation Violation

Male, 40 years old, Costa Mesa

Location of arrest: 500 block of Traverse Street

Supervision: None

Charges: Misdemeanor Warrant arrest

Female, 28 years old, of Mission Viejo

Location of arrest: 700 block of Wilson Street

Supervision: None

Charges: Possession of Paraphernalia

Male, 54 years old, of Costa Mesa

Location of arrest: 700 block of Wilson Street

Supervision: None

Charges: Possession of Paraphernalia

Male, 48 years old, Costa Mesa

Location of arrest: 700 block of Wilson Street

Supervision: None

Charges: Misdemeanor Arrest Warrant

The Costa Mesa Police Department will continue to collaborate with the Orange County Probation Department to conduct similar, future compliance checks of PRCS offenders living in the Costa Mesa community.

Chief Sharpnack welcomes newest officer to the department at swearing-in ceremony

Police Chief Rob Sharpnack on Monday Aug. 29 welcomed Nicholas Dempkowski to the force, the latest police officer to leave another department and join Costa Mesa's men and women in blue.

"This is yet another bright spot for Costa Mesa PD," Sharpnack said as he introduced officer Dempkowski. "Nick is going to be a great addition to our department. He is committed to public service and law enforcement and we are glad to have him aboard."

Attending the swearing in ceremony were Mayor Steve Mensinger and City CEO Tom Hatch as well as several staff members from the Police and Fire Departments and City Hall.

Dempkowski comes to Costa Mesa by way of Fullerton, where he joined that force in 2013 and trained as a K9 officer.

Prior to that, he worked as a reserve officer for the Long Beach Police Department after graduating from the Fullerton College Police Academy. He also has a background in off-road racing.

In addition to Officer Dempkowski, Sharpnack introduced new academy graduate Cory Montgomery as well as three new hires

for Communications/Dispatch division, Erin Cedillo, Nydia Robles and Jennifer Rosenberg.

He also congratulated several police officers for the great restraint they showed during an incident on Friday night, where a man armed with a knife was trying to commit suicide-by-cop. The man was detained safely, despite making threatening gestures toward police.

Sharpnack noted this is a particularly proud time for him as he rebuilds the department with the best and the brightest and bulks up staffing in speciality areas like detectives and community policing.

He thanked the efforts of recruiters such as Sgt. Jerry Hildeman and training assistant Jody Gonzalez for their efforts in bringing in top talent and he commended his officers for doing great work, even in the lean times.

“We have not dropped our service levels at all,” Sharpnack said. “We continue to provide a high level of service to the residents of Costa Mesa.”

New UCI Study Launched to Put a Price on Homelessness

Last week the Association of California Cities, Orange County, announced a new partnership with UC Irvine to study and quantify the costs of homelessness on cities in the county.

The study comes on the heels of a collaborative meeting Assistant CEO Rick Francis participated in with the ACC-OC Working Group on Homeless Issues in which he unveiled Five Pillars, including State Advocacy, Research and Data, Outreach and Sharing, Housing Options and Communications to Constituents, to combat the problem of homelessness. These Five Pillars were later shared with a countywide group of city leaders in May. Costa Mesa is viewed by many county leaders as a model approach in addressing the complexities of homelessness, and the city has already been using many facets of the Five Pillars.

The UCI study falls under the Research and Data pillar and will analyze a comprehensive set of costs and services provided to the homeless population by cities, agencies, and hospitals. This includes emergency health care services, public safety, administrative services, parks and recreation, mental health services, and a number of other elements along the continuum of care.

The study is expected to be completed by next year and will be a helpful tool in the effort to understand existing costs and that data can be used to better deploy public resources.



UCI University of
California, Irvine

Chiefs Take Part in Motor Home Madness Demolition Derby at the Fair

On Thursday Aug. 11, Costa Mesa Fire Chief Dan Stefano and Chief Rob Sharpnack participated in the Motor Home Madness Demolition Derby at the 2016 Orange County Fair.

The pair were also joined by Newport Beach Police Chief Jon Lewis. The money raised at the event goes to fund breast cancer awareness.

The first to enter the race was Chief Sharpnack.

Just after 8 p.m. Sharpnack, No. 44 (our department's designated number) entered the arena in a painted black and white RV, with the words police and SWAT painted on the sides and with police lights mounted on the top.

As the crowd cheered and began to get excited No. 51 Chief Stefano entered. Making his way around the arena, Stefano entered in a red and gold RV with flashing lights making a few laps round before parking on the opposite side of Sharpnack.

Before the event began all participants exited their RV's and ran around the arena waving their arms and getting the crowd pumped up. Stefano ran around with two fire extinguishers, which set the crowd off.

Unfortunately, Sharpnack and Stefano got knocked out the first half, but it was an exciting event that offered a fun and light-hearted vibe drew in thousands of spectators.

Police Foot Patrols Welcomed by Residents and Businesses

As part of the department's Community Oriented Policing efforts, Costa Mesa officers are expanding a new foot patrol unit that has been having success with eliminating loitering and other issues associated with homeless and transients on 19th Street and the Westside.

Now officers are taking those successes to the Eastside and walking the beat along 17th Street between Newport Boulevard and Santa Ana Avenue.

One recent Friday, officers, Slawek Luczkiewicz, June Jeong, Katrina Cover and Sgt. Bang Le walked through local shopping centers and strip malls, ensuring that transients were not loitering or sleeping there.

"We never have done a full scale foot patrol in the city," Chief Rob Sharpnack said. "It goes to the heart of Community Oriented Policing. The officers are excited about it and we will look for ways to make it more effective."

The new foot patrol dovetails with other community policing efforts such as the bike patrol, where officers are using creative ways to be more visible and get out of the patrol cars. And the 19th Street and 17th Street corridors are great places for the patrols in particular because of the density of businesses and residents.

The idea sprang forward as Chief Sharpnack was brainstorming

with his command staff about ways to improve the police department's community approach.

Lt. Joyce LaPointe was the main advocate for the foot patrols, Sharpnack said.

The officers are making a lot of progress, LaPointe said. What started out as an idea to help businesses in the community has expanded to also helping the homeless and letting them know where they can and can't be. And the response from the community, businesses and officers has been largely positive.

"Overall I've been getting a lot of good feedback from officers," LaPointe said. "It has brought back that old traditional feeling of being a cop and being in the community. I've been really pleased with the response."

Chief Sharpnack said he's heard the same positive feedback from his officers.

"What I'm hearing is the officers think it's another opportunity for them to get out and interact with members of the public," Chief Sharpnack said. "They develop a bond with residents and business owners."

Orange County DA Rackauckus says state measures and laws are contributing to crime spike

Orange County District Attorney Tony Rackauckus told a Costa Mesa Chamber of Commerce breakfast crowd that state laws that

make it harder for law enforcement to put criminals in jail are bad news for communities where crime is now on the rise and he warned that similar laws could be passed in November.

Speaking to chamber members gathered at the Costa Mesa Country Club, Rackauckus decried the passage of AB 109, which allows early release of those convicted of so-called victimless crimes and Proposition 47, a statewide measure that reclassified a whole list of felonies to misdemeanors.

"It's a big problem and it's a growing problem," Rackauckus said of the spike in the number of offenders who are either back on the street or getting slaps on the wrists for burglary and robbery. "Crime is on the increase."

The district attorney said tougher laws passed in the 1990s, like the Three Strikes law that sent criminals to jail for life after three major offenses, had brought the crime rate down to historic lows. But he said the latest measures are making it harder for law enforcement to do its job and reversing those years of progress.

"The Three Strikes law was great and put a lot of career criminals in prison," he said. "It was part of a national wave to reduce crime."

Rackauckus told the crowd that in 2015 his staff of 800 prosecutors and investigators reviewed 70,000 cases. Of those cases, 58,000 charges were filed with a 92% felony conviction rate.

He also said he has worked with other DAs to get a measure on the ballot, Proposition 66, that would make the death penalty more efficient.

But he warned of a competing measure, Proposition 62, that would eliminate the death penalty and Proposition 57, which if passed would make parole hearings easier to get for those behind bars.

That measure would potentially make 35,000 to 45,000 criminals eligible for parole.

In the Spotlight: CMPD Officer Lance Healey

Costa Mesa Police Officer Lance Healey was the recipient of June's CEO Leadership Award.

Our video team spent some time with Healey, who helps run the Police Department's highly successful Pre-Academy, to get an idea of what his workday is like. Click on the video below for more:

Costa Mesa Police Officer Lance Healey honored with CEO Leadership Award

City CEO Tom Hatch presented Costa Mesa Police Officer Lance Healey with the June CEO Leadership Award at the monthly meet and greet on Thursday June 23.

Healey joined the Costa Mesa Police Department in 2005 after a lengthy and distinguished 20-year career in the Marine Corps, where he held the titles of Team Leader, Platoon Sergeant, Platoon Commander and Chief Instructor at Camp Pendleton's

Scout Sniper Basic Course.

Officer Healey currently serves as the Sniper Team Leader for the department's SWAT team and is responsible for the section's monthly training. His involvement in the Training Bureau includes serving as a Firearms Instructor, development and execution of the new 16 hour POST-mandated firearms course, and development and administration of the Pre-Academy, as the Lead Instructor, preparing recruits from multiple agencies for the Sheriff's Academy. Lance is instrumental in ensuring the success of our Academy recruits.

He also hopes to reestablish Costa Mesa's K9 program and develop a new standard of excellence to ensure the program's long-term success.

In addition, Hatch honored seven newly hired employees, namely McKenna Ewing from the CEO's Office, Victoria Chavez, Ana Cordova, Rohan Ronvelia and Quinn Harter from Parks and Community Services and Kevin Suy and June Jeong from the Police Department. Jeong, the newest police recruit, graduated top of the class from the Orange County Sheriff's Academy.

Also honored was Bart Mejia from Public Services who was recently promoted to City Engineer.