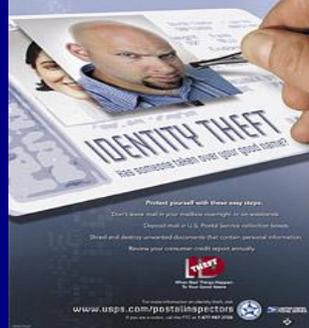




MAIL THEFT MAILBOX VANDALISM



Mail Theft is increasing across the nation and based on reported thefts in 2007, 2008 and 2009, our neighborhood is not immune to the crime. In addition, residents have reported instances of mailbox vandalism this past year.

Please consider these suggestions:

- If you are able to conduct business on-line, try to eliminate as many paper bills and statements as possible (many companies doing business on the internet allow this option).
- When it comes time for a tax refund (if you are so lucky), consider having it directly deposited in your financial institution rather than having it arrive by mail.
- Collect mail as soon after delivery as possible.
- Do not leave mail in your box overnight.
- You may also consider purchasing a secure mailbox. Keep in mind that a secure mailbox operates much on the same principle as locking your car doors – it may slow down theft, but it does not prevent it. However, anything that appears to a thief to involve an extra step will often cause the thief to move on to an easier target.
- If you know you will not be at home overnight or for several days, please have a neighbor collect your mail or place a hold on the mail and retrieve it from the post office when you return. <https://holdmail.usps.com/duns/HoldMail.jsp>
- If you intend on sending mail, please do so by dropping it off at the post office or in a USPS blue box. Do not place it in your mail box with the flag pole raised as this is an invitation to criminals.

In an emergency, please dial 911

If you live in a contract neighborhood, phone the Constable - 281.463.6666



- If you are expecting to receive a package when you are not at home, please make arrangements with a neighbor to collect the package. Packages left on doorsteps or at backdoors are easy targets for criminals trailing UPS trucks.
- If you discover someone tampering with your or your neighbor's mailbox, get a description of the person(s), a description and license plate number of any vehicle, then immediately report this information to HPD or the Constable and to the postmaster.
- Please take the time to speak with your teenagers about the consequences of vandalizing or tampering with the contents of a mailbox. Replacing a mailbox can represent an enormous expense in time and money. Moreover, mailboxes are protected by federal law, and crimes against them and the mail they contain are considered a federal offense. Violators can be fined up to \$1,000 or imprisoned for up to three years for each act of vandalism. You can also be held liable for as much as \$20,000 for property damage perpetrated by your child. The Postal Service does not take such crimes lightly and has a record of successfully finding and prosecuting juveniles.
- See information related to **mail fraud** and **identity theft** on the U.S. Postal Inspection Service's website: <http://postalinspectors.uspis.gov/>. The Postal Inspection Service also provides tips on its website to help **avoid identity theft**: <https://postalinspectors.uspis.gov/investigations/MailFraud/fraudschemes/mailtheft/IDTheftTips.aspx>.



WHAT TO DO IN THE EVENT OF MAIL THEFT

The USPS states that if you experience mail theft or mailbox vandalism, report it immediately to your local postmaster or a Postal Inspector. "Postal Inspectors may determine whether your problem is isolated or part of a larger mail theft problem in your neighborhood – and it may help them locate and apprehend the thieves. File a mail theft report with the Postal Inspectors by calling toll-free (877) 876-2455 or complete a report online at: <https://postalinspectors.uspis.gov/investigations/MailFraud/fraudschemes/mailtheft/ReportMailTheft.aspx>

Please also contact the BFSNC Security Committee through briarforests18@sbcglobal.net so that we may keep track of any mail theft crime trends in our neighborhood.

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