

Officer McElwee Says:

Legitimate Salespeople Will Not Use High Pressure Sales Tactics

By Teresa Simmons
Post Managing Editor

Once you open your door to a stranger and invite that person in, you'll probably need to start praying that this is an honest person. To avoid having to say this prayer the Mecklenburg County Crime Prevention Association has made public tips concerning door-to-door solicitors.

Officer Russ McElwee, coordinator of the Mecklenburg County Crime Prevention Association, located at 618 North College St., gave tips on when one should become suspicious of door-to-door solicitors.

"If a person comes to your door and wants you to give them money or for you to make the check out to them personally, this is one reason to become suspicious," officer McElwee stated.

What else should you look out for? Let's take Charlotte Post newspaper solicitors, for example. Does this person have a sample of the product for you to observe? Can you make the check out to the company and send it through the mail?

In the case of *The Charlotte Post*, you would not be able to receive your complete product right on the spot, but if you want to be on the safe side officer McElwee suggests that mailing your check to any company will "...cut down on the likelihood of losing money."

The problem with dishonest door-to-door solicitors becomes greater during the holiday season. "We have problems with magazine or book solicitors who never deliver during the year," officer McElwee stated. "But during the holidays there is a lot of soliciting for small toys and gifts which are never received."

The scam, according to McElwee usually goes like this: "They usually work in groups of four or five. They will come to your door and show you a brochure illustrating an item. They will solicit your money to them personally. The group will saturate a neighborhood and then move on to another part of the country." Female solicitors who are dishonest are just as numerous as their male counterparts," McElwee stressed.

If you are weary of a solicitor the Mecklenburg County Crime Prevention Association offers these safety measures:

-never let a solicitor into your home (if you are interested in the solicitation, have the solicitor make an appointment to come back), ask for a business card, and look for a company insignia on his or her apparel.

-if he or she comes back in two or three hours or the next week you will have had time to do your homework. Call the Better Business Bureau or the company the person claims to work for - make sure this person is a representative of the company. Also all businesses must register with the Better Business Bureau, according to McElwee.

-a woman should never allow a solicitor into the house if her husband is away, and she should never tell a solicitor she is alone.

-if you do make a purchase from a solicitor, never pay in cash. When paying, use a check written out to the order of the solicitor's company. Never pay to the order of the solicitor's personal name on the guise that they will repay the company. Be sure to get a receipt for any purchase made, and, if possible, try to get your item at time of purchase.

-most legitimate salespeople will not use high pressure tactics, and will leave your premises if you are not interested in the sale. If you encounter a pushy salesperson, contact the police. A salesperson, who won't leave, is a trespasser and is violating your rights, as well as the law. Don't fall prey to a hard-sell.

In a recent "Informer," a publication of the Mecklenburg County Crime Prevention Association,



Door-to-door solicitors, for the most part, are reputable salespersons who represent legitimate companies. One should, however, use caution when approached. (Illustration By Janice Dalton).

tion, door-to-door solicitors, for the most part, were described as "reputable salespersons who represent legitimate companies." But the newsletter made a point that there are "bad apples in every bunch."

It is also important that police statistics show that over 40 percent of rapes and robberies occur in residences where victims let the perpetrator into their homes.

There are also other holiday crime prevention tips offered by the Mecklenburg County Police Department:

Shopping: Shop with someone; don't carry large sums of money and never display it; be sure your car is in good operating condition with plenty of gas; tell someone where you're going and when you'll be back; park in a well, lighted area - as close to the entrance as possible and put all packages in the trunk - not on the seat or floor;

About your purse: Keep it closed and securely under your arm; keep it off the counter and out of the shopping cart and never let children carry it.

Going Away? Here is a home checklist and ideas for a more secure home; is property marked under "Operation Identification?"; neighbors have been asked to watch

your home and to pick up mail and delivered packages, etc.; automatic timers are set for lights and radio; the house is locked; shades, blinds, draperies are in their normal positions; police have been notified to watch your home; and neighbors have a phone number where you can be reached.

If you are staying home over the holidays the following is a home checklist: valuables are marked under "Operation Identification"; gifts and valuables are not in view from outside; doors are kept locked - especially when only one person is home; strangers are not invited inside; lights and radio are on a timer when you're away; no notes left to indicate your absence; and don't advertise your new TV, microwave oven, etc., by discarding the boxes on the curb, crush them and place them in trash bags.

The County Police Department also has gift ideas for Christmas: how about dead bolt locks for doors; an engraver would be a nice gift for your neighbors and relatives - you could even help them mark their valuables; and a whistle is a good, practical gift for a lady.

Taking heed to these suggestions could keep you from becoming a statistic and allow you to have one of the safest and merriest holidays ever.

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LIMIT 2 PLEASE

ROYAL

Pink Salmon 15 1/2 Oz. Can **\$1.38**

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