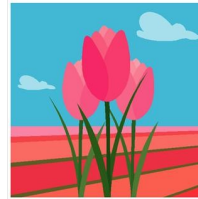


▶ *March 2011*

Block Watcher

"Spring is when you feel like whistling even with a shoe full of slush." - Doug Larson



Graffiti

Every couple of months the issue of graffiti gets brought to my attention by various citizens. Hopefully this answers a few of the most commonly asked questions.

Q: Is it Bellingham Police's responsibility to clean up the graffiti?

A: No! It is the property owner's responsibility to clean it up!

Q: Is Bellingham Police required to contact the owner to clean it up?

A: No.

Q: Should graffiti be reported to the police?

A: Yes! Please call 911 to make a report. An officer will come to your location.

Q: I have noticed graffiti on public property who is responsible?

A: If it is the City's property Public Works will clean it up but the city needs to know about it (see above).

Q: What is this graffiti crew I have heard of?

A: During the summer months an officer runs a graffiti clean up crew with troubled teens. Only the most egregious cases are cleaned by the crew with permission from the property owner.

Q: Is there a city ordinance to clean up graffiti?

A: Yes, it is considered a nuisance and falls under BMC 10.28.020

In this issue:

- Graffiti
- Medical Identity Theft
- Bellingham Municipal Codes
- Emergency Preparedness

Officer Katrin Dearborn

Crime Prevention

Bellingham Police

505 Grand Ave.

360-778-8660

Please email me with

comments or questions at:

kdearborn@cob.org

Did you know?

- *You can look up crime statistics for your neighborhood by going to the Police Department's website at www.cob.org/police and clicking on the neighborhood crime statistic link on the right hand side?*



Medical Identity Theft

Could identity thieves be using your personal and health insurance information to get medical treatment, prescription drugs or surgery? Yes! Could dishonest people working in a medical setting be using your information to submit false bills to insurance companies? Yes! Medical identity theft is a twist on traditional identity theft, which happens when someone steals your personal information. Like traditional identity theft, medical ID theft can affect your finances; but it also can take a toll on your health.

How would you know if your personal, health, or health insurance information has been compromised? According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the nation's consumer protection agency, you may be a victim of medical identity theft if:

- * you get a bill for medical services you didn't receive;
- * a debt collector contacts you about medical debt you don't owe;
- * you order a copy of your credit report and see medical collection notices you don't recognize;
- * you try to make a legitimate insurance claim and your health plan says you've reached your limit on benefits; or
- * you are denied insurance because your medical records show a condition you don't have.

Medical identity theft may change your medical and health insurance records: Every time a thief uses your identity to get care, a record is created with the imposter's medical information that could be mistaken for your medical information – say, a different blood type, an inaccurate history of drug or alcohol abuse, test results that aren't yours, or a diagnosis of an illness, allergy or condition you don't have. Any of these could lead to improper treatment, which in turn, could lead to injury, illness or worse. Keep yourself safe by shredding all medical documents!

Bellingham Municipal Code– So What Really Is The Law Anyway?

11.48.140 - Bicycles - Riding On Sidewalks (Wac 308-330-555)

- A. No person shall ride a bicycle upon a sidewalk in a business district. This provision shall not apply to law enforcement officers engaged in the performance of their duties.
- B. A person may ride a bicycle on any other sidewalk or any roadway unless restricted or prohibited by traffic-control devices.
- C. Whenever any person is riding a bicycle upon a sidewalk, such person shall yield the right-of-way to any pedestrian.

Emergency Preparedness~ Shelter In Place

Shelter in Place is a term that refers to creating a safe environment where you are protected from an exposure to hazardous materials. With just a few supplies and some simple steps, you can make your home a temporary shelter if a hazardous release occurs in your neighborhood.

SUPPLIES YOU WILL NEED: Duct tape, Plastic sheeting, Towels, Radio

HOW TO SHELTER IN PLACE: The goal is to temporarily seal yourself inside one room of your house until the hazard has dissipated. Here's the process:

- Close all doors and windows of your home.
- Turn off ventilation systems: heating, air conditioning, fireplace dampers.
- Go into a room with minimal doors and windows.
- Dampen towels and place over the cracks under doors.
- Tape the gaps around the door.
- Listen to the radio for news updates - Our local news station is AM 790.
- Remain in your sealed shelter until you are told it is safe to come out.