Rochester Police Department

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<u>Crime Prevention Bulletin</u>

Residents in your neighborhood have recently raised concerns about possible scam artists going door to door in an attempt to trick citizens out of their money and/or case their homes for a future burglary.

The Rochester Police Department would like to remind all city residents to follow these basic tips to deter crimes of this nature:

- Keep your doors locked at all times. Never open your door to a stranger without first identifying them. Legitimate callers will be able to provide identification and will *NOT* take offense to your asking to see it. This is an important rule to follow for ALL strangers. Scam artists will often appear friendly and courteous to gain your trust. Even City Inspectors and utility company workers should be asked for ID and will provide it willingly.

- NEVER give cash to a solicitor. Persons soliciting for a charity will be happy to take a check or (better yet) provide you with a contact phone number for you to call and arrange a donation through official channels. Legitimate "Door to door salesmen" must carry a permit issued by the City, and should always provide the service or product before expecting payment.

- Be skeptical of "get rich quick" schemes, secret deals or any offer that requires you to turn over large sums of money before you get what is promised.

- Don't be rushed into a deal. Never sign any contract until you and your lawyer, banker or other expert has read it thoroughly.

- Trust your instincts. If something seems too good to be true, it probably is.

- Report ALL suspicious persons immediately to 911. Officers will respond in an effort to identify and apprehend these criminals before they prey on someone else.

- Don't be taken in by a stranger's "sob story". Many scam artists will play on your good nature and desire to help someone in need. If a total stranger approaches you and asks for your help, your best response is to call 911. The 911 center is able to dispatch many forms of aid including: police, fire, medical, social and mental health experts. These responders are properly trained to assist persons in legitimate need. We will also be able to deal with those who are just trying to "con" you out of your hard earned money. Common scams in this area include:

  - "My car ran out of gas, can I borrow some money to fill this gas can?"
    i. (People who really run out of gas call for roadside assistance or call a friend or family member for help…they DON'T ask strangers for cash.)

  - "I need money for food" or "I will work for food".
    i. (There are MANY social programs that provide free food to those in need. A person who is really willing to work for food would probably have a job and money to buy their own food. It is much more likely that your money will feed their addiction to drugs or alcohol. A call to 911 can allow police to steer this person towards the nearest food kitchen or assist them with other social services.

  - "I need money for my baby's medicine, can you help me?"
    i. (If someone really has a child who needs medical attention, 911 is the fastest and most certain way to get them what they need. A parent who really got themselves to a point that they can't get medicine for their child is not likely to use your cash for the right purpose. It is more likely that the money will buy drugs or alcohol. Call 911 and allow our Family Crisis Team to get them genuine aid.)

  - "I'm going door to door cleaning gutters / shoveling driveways / raking leaves"
    i. (Legitimate contractors don't solicit door to door. People who do go door to door may seem like a bargain compared to professional contractors, but they are likely to do a poor job or do nothing at all…except take your cash. Also keep in mind that these door to door workers will not carry insurance, which means that you will be liable for any injury they sustain while on your property.)

Be a good neighbor…watch out for your neighborhood