

Postal Inspectors Ed Trejo and Denise Planas attended a Crime Forum at the Garden District (a central Tucson neighborhood) this past Tuesday and shared important information about mail theft .

**IT IS A FEDERAL OFFENSE TO STEAL MAIL.** The US Postal Inspection Service is the law enforcement arm of the postal service and they enforce 200+ Federal laws governing the mail. There are 6 Postal inspectors in Tucson investigating mail theft, illegal mailings (arms, drugs, money), and violence against mail carriers. Mail theft is definitely on the rise, not just in Tucson, but across the nation. The Inspectors work with TPD and the Sheriff's department.

The Inspectors shared that:

- Mail theft does not necessarily occur at night. Mail is sometimes stolen during daylight hours, often right after it is delivered. Thieves may even follow the mail carrier or Fed Ex Delivery vans.
- The main purpose of mail theft is identity theft.
- Thieves steal checks made out to you and checks that you are mailing out. They wash the check and then write in a bigger amount and deposit it in an account opened with stolen personal information.
- Mostly it is one or two individuals doing mail theft in an area.
- Thieves target streets where one or two residents do not pick up their mail daily, especially if the mailbox is overflowing or has a door that will not stay up. They then hit the homes on the rest of that street since they are in the area. If you see a neighbor is not taking in their mail on a daily basis, speak with them about it because it does affect everyone on your street.
- Thieves have actually gotten into "turf" wars with other mail thieves about stealing mail from a specific area that is an easy target due to a few people not checking their mail regularly.
- If a thief discovers an address where the resident does not regularly check their mail, the thief will start using that address as their own. They will steal the person's identity and apply for credit cards, open bank accounts using that address, etc.
- Thieves will steal the pre-approved credit card offers (from ARP, AAA, etc.) and apply for that card, and then they'll watch your mailbox and grab the card as soon as it arrives. Next, they'll watch the box for the PIN number for activating the card to arrive a few days later.
- **DO NOT PUT OUTGOING MAIL IN YOUR MAILBOX. DO NOT PUT YOUR FLAG UP.**
- The safest way to mail an item is to hand it directly to a USPS carrier. The next safest is to take into a Post Office and mail it in an interior box. The large blue collection boxes are relatively safe, but they are old and most have not been updated with the newer boxes that have enhanced security. Even then these new boxes are not 100% secure, though. In Phoenix, they ram the collection or cluster mailboxes with a truck and pull them out and cart them off.
- If you are expecting a high value item, make sure it is delivered directly to you. Don't allow it to be left at your door. USPS Carriers can leave package wherever you request them to, even at a neighbors.
- A lot of times identity theft happens when address changes are made or mail is being stopped for a time. If away extended periods of time, put mail on hold.
- Your Postal Carrier can NOT insist that you move your mailbox to the street if you have always received mail at your house. If that were to ever happen, contact your Postal Station or the Postal Inspectors. Unfortunately, if your box is currently at the street, you cannot move it back to the house. Many years ago, a mail carrier did force new residents to move their mailboxes to the curb. That was not legal, but there is nothing that can be done about that now.
- Cluster mailboxes at apartment complexes and trailer parks are very vulnerable for theft. In other parts of the country, mail carriers have been assaulted so that the Cluster Box keys can be stolen.
- Graffiti on cluster mailboxes - report to the postal station. If they do not address cleaning up the graffiti in a timely manner, then call the Postal Inspector. They will talk directly to the station master and make sure the graffiti is cleaned up.

**REPORT STOLEN MAIL. REPORT MAIL DISCARDED IN THE STREET.**

