CRIME TREND ALERT BULLETIN – SELLING OF PERSONAL PROPERTY TO STRANGERS

Issued: August 31, 2016

As you may have read from recent mass email notifications (sent 8/28 and 8/30), Department of Police Services was made aware of three reports in which individuals selling property (in these cases, cell phones) to strangers were lured by potential buyers. When the victims met up with the suspected buyer(s), the suspect(s) took possession of the property and fled. Police Services is providing crime prevention tip information to help students understand the dangers in this practice. Incidents reported to CSUN PD this week are listed below the crime prevention tips:

Crime Prevention Tips to Keep You Safe:

Before You Buy/Sell:
- Don’t rely on email alone, get a call back number. Make sure you have a phone number to contact the seller/buyer. It won’t guard you against being scammed but it does help as a secondary means of contact.
- Be especially careful when buying/selling high value items.
- Do not provide too much personal information. A first name, phone number/email address should be sufficient to conduct business.
- Do not rent housing or purchase goods without first seeing them.
- Ask yourself, “Is this too good to be true?” If the answer is yes, you might be dealing with a scammer.

Arrange a Meeting:
- Avoid meeting with strangers in areas that are not public. Choose instead to meet in a public place like a police station, coffee shop, restaurant, or a bank.
- Do not meet in a secluded place, like an empty parking lot or local park.
- Do not invite strangers into your home or arrange to meet at theirs.
- Don’t go alone. Always bring someone with you and tell family or friends the arrangements you have made.
- Take your cell phone. Leave your wallet/purse with cash, credit cards and personal information somewhere safe.

Remember:
- Never take any action that could jeopardize your personal safety; do not attempt to resist a robber or engage in any kind of physical confrontation.
- Report any emergency to police by calling 911 immediately; note as much detail about the suspect (clothing description, direction they fled, etc.) to the dispatcher.
- Utilize a nearby campus blue light phone to notify police immediately if you do not have a cell phone; ask someone else to call police for you.
- Always trust your instincts—if “something’s not right” get out of the situation immediately.
- Stick to the plan. A last minute change to meet at another location or to conduct the transaction in the buyer/sellers car is a red flag. Stick to the agreement you made and remember if something doesn’t seem right -- trust your instincts.
When Dealing with Money:

- Avoid making purchases requiring large amounts of cash and/or high priced valuables.
- Accept cash with caution. Check all denominations for counterfeit bills before handing over any property.
- Never give your financial information (bank account number, social security number, eBay/PayPal info, etc.).
- Fake cashier checks & money orders are common. Banks will hold you responsible when the fake is discovered.
- Never wire funds via Western Union, MoneyGram or other wire service - anyone who asks you to do so is likely a scammer.
- Do not submit to credit or background checks until you have met the job interviewer or landlord/agent in person and have confirmed the business is legitimate.
- Avoid shipping or escrow services and know that only a scammer will "guarantee" your transaction.

Reported Crimes:

- **Sunday, August 28, 2016 around 3:15 p.m. – Grand Theft**
  Location: 9300 block of Zelzah Avenue. University Park (UP), Curbside Near Buildings #12 & #13(on-campus)

  **Reported Offense:** Victim placed a for-sale add for his cell phone on the website Offer Up. The victim met up with a potential buyer along the 9300 block of Zelzah Avenue. The suspect approached the victim’s vehicle and opened the passenger side door. The suspect asked to see the cell phone and the victim told the suspect to sit down and he would then let him look at the phone. The suspect started to get inside the vehicle and then grabbed the phone from the victim’s hand. The suspect ran west through the open gate between UP 12 & 13. The victim did not give chase and instead went to the Police Services substation near UP 14 to report the crime to police.

  **Suspect:** The victim described the suspect as: Male, Black, 6’-00 with an athletic build. Haircut “to about a #2,” acne complexion, wearing a white shirt with a green vertical stripe, brown shorts, and Converse shoes.

- **Sunday, August 28, 2016 around 6:20 p.m. – Robbery**
  Location: Zelzah Avenue at Superior Street (on-campus)

  **Reported Offense:** Victim reported to police that he met with 3 males who were interested in purchasing his used cell phone. During the exchange, one male grabbed the victim's cell phone from his hand. One of the males stated that they had a gun. The males then fled the location on foot west into the University Park (dorms) near building 13. No gun was seen.

  **Suspects:** The victim described the suspects as follows:  
  Suspect #1: Male, Black, 18-22years of age, braided hair or dreadlocks, last seen wearing a red shirt, black shorts.  
  Suspect #2: Male, Black, 18-22years of age, last seen wearing a white shirt, black or blue shorts.
Suspect #3: Male, Black, 18-22 years of age, last seen wearing a black shirt, black shorts.

- **Tuesday, August 30, 2016 around 12:46 p.m. – Robbery**
  Location: Lassen Street and Lindley Avenue (off-campus)

**Reported Offense:** Victim met the suspect at the above location to sell her cell phone to the suspect. The suspect attempted to grab the victim's cell phone and punched her in the face with a closed fist. Suspect fled to an unknown location by unknown means. The community is advised that two similar incidents occurred on August 28, 2016. The incidents involved suspects attempting to steal cell phones by luring victims at various locations around housing.

**Suspect:** Male, Black, approximately 20 years old, muscular build, 5'11 last seen wearing red t-shirt with logo in front, black shorts with an "Under Armour" logo, wearing flip flops with white socks pulled up.

*If you have been a victim or have any information regarding these crimes, please contact Detective Sergeant Rene Lino at (818)677-6919.*

*If you want to remain anonymous, please call the CSUN PD We-Tip Hotline at (818) 677-TIPS (8477). This line is recorded and not answered by a live person.*