



NEWS RELEASE

HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF POLICE OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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Contact: Sherry Llewellyn, 410-313-2236
stllewellyn@howardcountymd.gov

Police implement “Transaction Safe Place” for online sale exchanges

The Howard County Police Department has implemented a “Transaction Safe Place” program with the goal of providing the safest possible location for residents to meet after arranging to buy or sell items online.

“Online sale sites have become more and more popular,” said Police Chief Gary Gardner. “While we have not had many serious safety issues reported in Howard County related to these exchanges, we wanted to offer a place to help facilitate this activity as safely as possible. If someone seems uncomfortable with agreeing to make an exchange at the police station, there should be a red flag for a resident about that sale.”

Two designated parking spaces, marked with yellow signs, are available for this purpose at the Northern District Station at 3410 Court House Drive, Ellicott City; and Southern District Station at 11226 Scaggsville Road, Laurel. Individuals may also use the lobby of each station.

The designated areas are video-recorded 24 hours a day, however police encourage residents to conduct transactions during daylight hours. Those who plan to take advantage of the program should be aware that officers can only become involved in a transaction if criminal activity is reported. There will not be officers assigned to stand-by for these exchanges, but if anything criminal were to occur, a resident could walk into the lobby to make a report.

Residents should continue to use common sense when buying, selling and meeting people whom they do not know. The department offers the following tips for a safer sale:

- Don’t agree to meet anyone who refuses to do so at a police station or other public location.
- NEVER use your home as a meeting location.
- Arrange sales during daylight hours only and don’t go to the meeting location alone.
- Insist on using cash instead of personal checks.

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