

Distraction Burglary warning - Cambridge City

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Message sent by

Rachel Carr (Police, Community Safety Officer, South Cambridgeshire)

Police are urging residents to be vigilant and to look out for elderly relatives and neighbours following a spate of distraction burglaries in Cambridge City.

Most of the burglaries have involved criminals claiming to be either police officers or Neighbourhood Watch members.

The burglaries happened on Saturday (May 13) in Emery Street and Russell Court, yesterday in New Street and at about 6a.m. today (May 15) in James Street.

After making the false claim the offender has pushed past the victim. In today's incident, the burglar assaulted the victim and pushed them to the ground before stealing money.

The most recent crimes in South Cambridgeshire have taken place (28 March) at Haddows Close, Longstanton, and (02 February) at Daintry Close, Papworth Everard in the first incident a male posing as a waterboard official distracted the victim while another entered the property to steal a purse.

The second incident involved a male posing as a waterboard official, the male claimed there was leak and asked the victim to turn on their taps, while they stole cash from the property.

Crime Reduction Officer Rachel Carr said: "We want to urge people to look out for the more vulnerable members of their community to help reduce crimes such as these. If you have an elderly relative or neighbour who lives alone it's worth talking to them about this type of burglary."

"There are some key messages we are trying to get across to prevent these cowardly offenders from getting into people's homes." Although thieves may show up on the doorstep posing as water workers, water company employees will try whenever possible to make an appointment before visiting a home.

Be especially wary of anyone saying that they are from 'the water board' as the water board does not exist. A genuine water company employee will name the water provider, such as Cambridge Water or Anglian Water and will carry a company identification card.

Not Sure Don't Open the door

Before opening the door to any stranger, stop.

LOCK – Are your back windows and doors locked? If not, lock them before you answer the front door as distraction burglars often work in pairs - one distracts, while the other steals

STOP - Are you expecting anybody?

Ask the caller: What are you here for? Can I check your I.D.?

Do you have paperwork relating to your call?

CHAIN - Put this on before you open the door. If you have not got one, it is a worthwhile investment. It will give you that extra 'safe space' and barrier between you and the caller and then,

CHECK - Ask for their identification card, take it and look at it carefully. Close the door and check the number in the phone book - not the number on the card. If they are genuine they will not mind waiting or coming back another day.

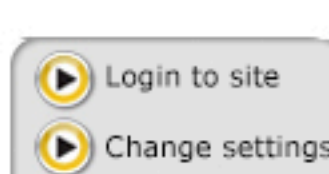
If the door has a chain, use it, and ask to see a form of identification. Better still ask the caller to hand their identification through a window or letter box (keeping the door shut), and call the utility company/ emergency service to confirm that the visit is legitimate and the identification is not a fake. A genuine caller will happily wait while the necessary checks are made. **Not sure? Don't open the door!**

TIP Security devices such as door-chains and bars will give you more time to think; and can deter bogus callers from entering your home.

- Look out for phrases such as '**I'm from the waterboard**' this should ring alarm bells straight away. Which company?
- Many organisations have password schemes (gas/ utility companies) and free phone hot lines to check the identity of their staff.
- If you are still not sure if the caller is genuine – contact the police on **999** straight away.
- Do not keep large amounts of cash at home, use a bank or local Post Office.

Anyone with any information should call the police on **101** or Crimestoppers, anonymously, on 0800 555111

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