

INDEPENDENCE POLICE

The Word on the Street Newsletter

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Jury Duty Scam

**Special points
of Interest:**

- The IPD website has interactive communication on several subjects. Log on at:
www.ci.independence.mo.us/ipd

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Imagine, if you will, your telephone rings and you answer it in a cordial voice by saying, "Hello". The stern voice of the caller replies, "This is (they give a name) with the (they give name of the local court) court system. An arrest warrant is being issued against you for failing to report for jury duty." In an astonished voice you reply, "What? I never received a jury duty notification. This is a big mistake." The caller says, "If you want me to verify that you did not receive a jury notification and rescind the warrant, I'm going to need some information from you." At that point, the scammer proceeds to ask you for personal information that allows them to steal your identification if you provide it.

Obviously, the rhetoric can be varied, but the principle is the same; to get you, the innocent victim, to divulge your personal information so the scammer can steal your identity and ravage your bank account or perpetrate some other crime against you. The scam has been reported in several other states and it is just a matter of time before it is tried in our area. The jury duty scam apparently works and it is understandable why it works. Most citizens are honest

law-abiding people who regard their civic duty as important. When they are accused of neglecting their duty and breaking the law they are caught off guard. They are upset, and somewhat frightened that a warrant for their arrest is being issued by the court system. It all happens so quickly that the innocent victim is liable to divulge almost any information to prove their innocence and make the sudden nightmare go away.



Never fall prey to this kind of telephone scam. The truth is that no court employees will ever call anyone demanding their social security number, their bank account number, driver's license number, credit card number, or any other personal and confidential information. If one were to miss jury duty, most courts would follow up with the prospective juror with a letter asking for an explanation or rescheduling with another summons. The important

point is that this is just another telephone scam seeking to obtain private information in order to commit another crime. The jury duty scam is just another variant for stealing valuable information. Never ever give out private information over the telephone, especially to strangers, who have called you with a story, no matter how shocking or sensational the story may be.

There is another variation on this jury scam that should be noted. In Maryland, reports from citizens were received that telephone scammers were calling to obtain private information by posing as court employees to assemble a pool of prospective jurors for selection in upcoming trials. The scammers were asking for full names, social security numbers, and other private information. All of these scam angles are known as "phishing", where the scammer makes attempts to obtain private and sensitive information that can be detrimental to the victim's financial well-being.

If you have any questions regarding possible attempts to steal your private information, please call the Independence Police Department at (816) 325-9330.

Fireworks: Safety and City Ordinance

Celebrating Independence Day should be a safe and enjoyable occasion for everyone. Statistics show that for thousands of people, tragedy will strike due to fireworks-related injuries. In 2001, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, four people died and an estimated 9,500 were treated in emergency departments for fireworks-related injuries. Approximately 12% of those injuries required hospitalization and about 50% of the injuries were suffered by children ages 14 years and younger. The kinds of fireworks-related injuries most frequently reported involved hands and fingers (30%), eyes (28%), and the head and face (15%).

The types of fireworks associated with most injuries are not exotic or illegal fireworks. Those types account for only about 5% of the injuries. Most injuries are caused by the common "class C" fireworks including bottle rockets that can fly into one's face causing eye injuries; firecrackers that can injure one's hands or face if they explode at close range, and sparklers that burn at more than 1,000 degrees F, and can ignite clothing. The estimated annual cost of fireworks-related

injuries in the U.S. is around 100 million dollars.

In light of the serious dangers involving fireworks, the City of Independence wisely enacted an ordinance that not only allows residents to enjoy the spirit of celebration through the use of fireworks, but



also protects citizens and property from the harmful effects of dangerous fireworks. The new ordinance governing fireworks within the city limits of Independence allows the use of certain fireworks. According to Independence Fire Chief Sandra Schiess, "All fireworks purchased through approved vendors inside the city will be screened and ap-

proved prior to sale. Citizens should be aware that some fireworks purchased outside of the City may be illegal to discharge in Independence. Possession, discharge, storage, or handling of bottle rockets, aerial missiles and similar devices, sparkler bombs, or any altered or combined fireworks is not permitted in Independence. Children under the age of 16 must be supervised by an adult."

You and your family can also enjoy the celebration of Independence Day by attending any of several professional, public fireworks displays and activities that are scheduled throughout the metropolitan area. The City of Independence will be hosting the annual Independence Day celebration on July 4th, beginning at 8:00 p.m. on the grounds of the Mormon Visitor's Center, 937 W. Walnut. It promises to be one of the most fabulous celebrations anywhere. The fanfare will begin with the exciting patriotic music of the 50 member strong Spirit of Independence Band. The band will play favorite renditions of Independence Day and continue to play throughout the awe-inspiring fireworks display which begins at 9:15 p.m. Everyone is invited to bring their lawn chairs and blankets and enjoy the festivities while we celebrate this great nation's Day of Remembrance.

Detectives Recognized for Performance

Performance Commendations: Outstanding job performance as a detective from Det. Chris Arnold has been recognized and commended by his supervisors and citizens. The unusual aspect of his performance is that Det. Arnold has

been a detective for only one month. Since that time he has worked cases such as fraud, burglary, and robbery, and has helped solve many of those cases leading to the arrest of at least 15 suspects. At this time he has several arrest warrants pending on burglary suspect and carjacking suspects. The burglary case he

worked with lead Det. Mike Johann is an ongoing investigation that has solved at least 7 burglaries and is believed to lead to solving many more with several more suspects. The letter of commendation Chris and Det. Johan received on this particular case puts them in consideration for Officers of the Month.

Special Victims Unit Investigates Human Trafficking

Earlier this year the U. S. Attorney's Office, Western District of Missouri, made a request for the Independence Police Department's Special Victims Unit (SVU) to assist in a labor/human trafficking case that Immigration Customs Enforcement, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Kansas Department of Labor and Kansas Department of Revenue had been working for several years. The Independence SVU was requested for this investigation because it is the lead agency/grantee for the Bureau of Justice Administration Human Trafficking Grant.

The U.S. Attorney's Office became concerned as they studied the case that it went far beyond a labor fraud case. They saw indicators of possible human trafficking activity and realized they needed help in determining if human trafficking was indeed present with the case and to what extent.

The U.S. Attorney's Office knew the Independence SVU had the necessary expertise and experience with investigating human trafficking crimes, since numerous human trafficking cases had already been prosecuted on a federal level from investigations initiated by the SVU.

The IPD Special Victims Unit is the only specialty unit in the Midwest that is solely dedicated, trained, and proficient with investigating human trafficking crimes.

Once the SVU received the case they immediately began investigative operations that focused around a business called Giant Labor Solutions which is in the Westport area of Kansas City, Missouri. It was discovered that Giant had been responsible for bringing approximately 1,000 foreign workers into the United States and distributing them throughout at least 14 differ-

ent states to work in casinos, hotels, restaurants and construction sites for extremely low wages. The workers were charged unexplained visa fees and transportation fees, which resulted in some of their paychecks having a zero or negative earning amount listed on the checks. Additionally, the workers were forced to live in apartments



Photo courtesy of:

National Crime Prevention Council

provided by Giant where they were paying high monthly rental fees and housed with numerous individuals living in each apartment.

As a result of the SVU investigation 12 individuals who operated Giant were indicted on a 45 count, sealed federal indictment charging racketeering, racketeering conspiracy, forced labor trafficking, fraud in foreign labor contracting, aggravated identity theft, harboring illegal aliens, marriage fraud, visa fraud, money laundering, mail fraud, extortion, wire fraud, and numerous other charges. Seizure warrants were issued for 16 vehicles, and numerous bank accounts. Shortly after the indictments, 16 search warrants were issued for various businesses and residences in the Kansas City area.

As SVU's investigation of human

trafficking yielded positive results, many of the suspects attempted to flee the country. Law enforcement observed suspects emptying bank accounts, purchasing high dollar electronics equipment and attempting to ship it overseas, and quickly attempting to sell vehicles for cash. However, many arrests were made at airports and elsewhere before all suspects were able to leave.

This case has attracted national attention and is still considered an ongoing investigation. The case also shows how local law enforcement, the Independence Police Department, can and does work with other local, state, and federal agencies to investigate crimes that are on a global scale. In today's world it cannot be otherwise, because many crimes that are initiated in foreign countries can adversely affect citizens locally in the United States. This case also revealed that the type of forced labor as found in the Middle East and Central Asia has now been perpetrated in the United States.

The shocking reality for international criminals is the discovery of the Independence Police Department being a world class police department capable of dealing with international crimes.

The type of investigation SVU was forced to conduct historically takes a very long time to gather enough evidence for prosecution. Because of their training and experience however, the Independence Police Department was able to successfully acquire the needed evidence, and obtain the required legal justification for warrants and arrests within a two month period.

INDEPENDENCE POLICE DEPARTMENT

223 N. Memorial Drive
Independence, Missouri 64050
Phone: (816) 325-7300

Phone: (816) 325-7258
Fax: (816) 325-7316
E-mail: tgentry@indepmo.org

From the very beginning, the Independence Police Department's focus has been on serving the citizens and guests of this great city. Throughout the years during the best of times and the worst of times, we wanted to be there for you. Nothing will ever change that desire, for the Mission of the Independence Police Department...

"...is to protect life, individual liberty and the property of all people within the City of Independence; to develop and maintain a positive relationship with members of the community; and to foster a positive work environment for police employees."

Thank you for the honor and privilege of serving you the citizens of Independence, Missouri.

Child Abuse: Society's Dark Side

We in the United States adore our youth and see them as our most valuable resource. We often say they are our future, and unlike many other countries throughout the world, we have given our children special status by enacting special laws to protect them. We have child labor laws, laws that provide special governmental services for them to eat (school lunches), Child Protection with DFS, traffic laws around schools and school busses to protect children, criminal laws such as child endangerment, statutory rape, child safety seats, and a whole host of other laws too numerous to mention. We have kid shows on TV, children theme parks, and many other child oriented programs and institutions that bring happiness and joy to our children as it should be. However, with all of the wonderful things we have to enjoy and be particularly proud of in our society today, especially when it comes to our children, there is one evil reality that lurks behind closed doors that is seldom discussed in our homes, and is almost unconscionable to contemplate, and that is the issue of child abuse.

A report issued by the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) states that an estimated 1,530 children died in the

United States in 2006 as a result of child abuse. According to many researchers and practitioners it is believed child abuse deaths are underreported. In states such as Colorado and North Carolina, studies have shown, "...that an estimated 50 to 60 percent of child deaths resulting from abuse or neglect are not recorded as such (Crume, DiGuseppi, Byers, Sirotnak, & Garrett, 2002; Herman-Giddens et al., 1999)." Medscape Medical News 2008 reports that, "...child abuse in "high-income" countries is far more common than official statistics show, with just 10% of suspected cases investigated and substantiated annually...." In second, third,

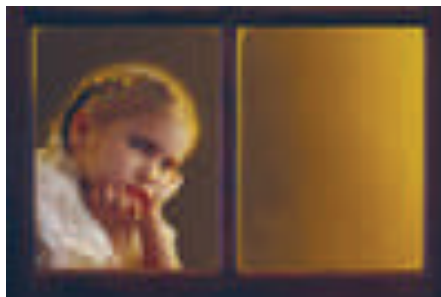


Photo courtesy of Acclaim Images

and fourth world countries the problem of child abuse is even worse. The World Health Organization reports at least 155,000 children younger than 15 years old die annually as a result of abuse and neglect.

The International Center for Assault Prevention reports that worldwide, approximately 40 million children below the age of 15 are subjected to child abuse each year. Much of that abuse of children involves human trafficking for sexual exploitation. The U.S. Department of justice reports that of the 600,000 to 800,000 people trafficked across international borders each year, 50 percent of them are children, and a majority of them are forced into the commercial sex trade. The rest are forced into labor and other illegal activities.

Sadly, the problem of child abuse exists in every city in every country. That is why the Independence Police Department has created a Special Victims Unit to investigate human trafficking, and child abuse in all its various forms. The unit has been wildly successful but has only scratched the surface of the problem that exists locally. Please take an active part in helping innocent children by educating yourself and reporting suspected child abuse.

If you or anyone else would like to talk to someone about the problem of child abuse or to report a case of child abuse, please call the Independence Police Investigations Division at (816) 325-7330.