

MEDIA RELEASE

Increase in Online Ordering Results in Increased Package Thefts

December 4, 2020

With the increase in online ordering due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Sheriff's Office has seen an increase in reports of package thefts in our community. To fight this epidemic, our Property Crimes Unit (PCU) is continuing its Bait Package Program during this busy holiday shopping season.

Now in its sixth year, the Bait Package Program employs decoy packages that are left in package theft "hot spots." Our detectives work with the United States Postal Service to identify those areas based on reported mail thefts. We enlist the help of volunteers to leave decoy packages equipped with GPS tracking technology. When the bait package is moved, alerts are sent to deputies with real-time maps to show where the package is being moved. In the past, we have arrested several package thieves using this technology.

When compared to this same point of the year (January 1 – December 4) the numbers of "theft of mail" or "theft from yard" calls to the Sheriff's Office in 2020 have increased from previous years.

2017 – 239

2018 – 317

2019 – 247

2020 – 371

As thefts of this nature increase due to the demand for ordering online, it is now more important than ever that we continue to fight against "porch pirates" in Washington County.

There are a few things community members can do to fight package thefts:

- If possible, consider installing a doorbell surveillance camera.
- Find an alternate package delivery location, such as an office or neighbor that is home.
- Sign up for tracking updates and alerts so you know when your package is delivered.
- Pick up your package as soon as possible (don't let it sit out for days at a time).
- Purchase a secure "drop box" for your porch for packages to be placed in by carriers.

Also, community members should consider filing a police report if they have a package stolen to help fight this ongoing problem. If there is no suspect information, reports can easily be filed online at: www.wcsooregon.org. If you have video or suspect information, call non-emergency at 503-629-0111.



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