



**October 2004**

**Minnesota Crime Prevention Association's  
Topic of the Month**

The MCPA strives to bring current information regarding prevention topics to its members. Please feel free to use these resources within your own community. Great for newsletters, emails or news release.

**Crime Prevention Month  
Reducing False Alarms  
Fire Safety at Gas Pumps**

Use this month to get back to the basics. Promote Neighborhood Watch, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design and reporting suspicious activity. Be sure to visit our web site for specific information on each topic.

Definition of Crime Prevention:

Crime is the result of someone having the DESIRE or wish to commit a crime, the ABILITY or knowledge to commit a crime, and the OPPORTUNITY to commit the crime.

THUS: Desire + Ability + Opportunity = CRIME

In order for a crime to take place (generally), it must first exist in the mind of the offender. This criminal state of mind may be the product of any number of sources, including, but not limited to:

- ✍ Desire for monetary or financial gain
- ✍ Desire for acceptance within a peer group or subculture group
- ✍ Desire for revenge
- ✍ An emotional or psychological disorder

The influence of any one of these might satisfy the element of DESIRE. The wide variety and complexity of the underlying causes seriously limit the success of efforts to prevent crime by reducing or eliminating DESIRE.

Much like desire, OPPORTUNITY arises from a variety of sources; however, the source of opportunity can be specifically identified. Proven effective measures can be taken to reduce or eliminate OPPORTUNITY. OPPORTUNITY can be precipitated by the criminal, the victim, or by a given situation. Examples of these are:

- ✍ Leaving the car unlocked
- ✍ Leaving the garage door open
- ✍ Inadequate lighting
- ✍ Not securing personal belongings, etc.

**REDUCE the Opportunity!** Lock your doors, leave a light on, put your belongings out of sight.

**Resources:**

- ? NCPC in the 2004 calendar has several brochures for children and parents for reprint.

## REDUCING FALSE ALARMS

Did you know that 95% - 98% of all alarms are false alarms? Law enforcement agencies respond to an average of 3-5 false alarms per week, more in larger communities.

- ? It takes two Officers to respond to each alarm.
- ? It takes an average of 30 minutes per Officer, per alarm, to respond and find out if it is a false alarm.
- ? This is 5 hours out of a day wasted on false alarms.
- ? Most false alarms are human error.

### **Cost of False Alarms to the Home or Business Owner:**

- ? Many communities have an ordinance and there is typically no charge for the first three false alarms
- ? The next alarm could cost as much as \$500 and additional alarms even more expensive.
- ? Examples: First three are free, fourth and fifth may cost \$100 each and the sixth would be another \$150.

### **How to prevent False Alarms:**

- ? Each person/family member who operates the alarm need to be thoroughly trained on how to use the alarm
- ? Know how to cancel the alarm if it goes off by accident
- ? Check all doors/windows before activating the alarm
- ? Don't block beams of motion detector alarms
- ? Be sure there is no motion hanging in the area (plants, decorations that move when the heat or air comes on)
- ? Don't turn off electrical power to the system, standby batteries don't last forever
- ? Treat the alarm system with care (wiring and detection devices can be damaged easily)

Refer to the National and/or Minnesota Burglar and Fire Alarm Association for many resources to assist law enforcement and residents in the reduction of false alarms and model policies. [www.alarm.org](http://www.alarm.org) or [www.mnbfaa.org](http://www.mnbfaa.org)

## **Automobile Refueling Fire Safety**

Three recent incidents, in which cell phones ignited fumes during fueling operations, have prompted fire safety concerns for the public at self-service gas stations. In one case, a cell phone was placed on the car's trunk lid during fueling; it rang igniting gas fumes, destroying the car and the gasoline pump. In the second case, a person suffered severe burns to their face when they answered a cell phone call while refueling their car. In another case, a man suffered burns to the thigh and groin, when the cell phone in his pocket, rang while he was fueling his car.

### **You should know that:**

Cell phones can ignite gasoline fumes and should not be used in or around gasoline refueling stations. Cell phones that light up when turned on or when they ring release enough energy to provide a spark for ignition.

Synthetic clothing and seat covers will generate very strong static sparks and will ignite gasoline fumes during refueling operations.

### **Four Rules for Safe Refueling**

- 1) Don't smoke. NO SMOKING or open flames are allowed within 20 feet of gas pumps.
- 2) Shut off the engine. Vehicle electrical wiring and exhaust catalytic converters can easily ignite gasoline fumes, especially if fuel is accidentally spilled during refueling. This includes diesel powered vehicles if gasoline is also pumped at the same island.
- 3) Don't use your cell phone; leave it inside the vehicle or turn it off
- 4) Do not re-enter your vehicle during fueling. Sliding in and out of the car seat will re-generate static electricity that must be discharged to a metal portion of the vehicle before you return to remove the fuel nozzle.