



August 2009

Quarterly Community Newsletter

Booming Gun Sales

Bold headlines in our local newspapers proclaimed "Inland gun sales booming; fear cited." Steven Buford, program manager for the California Bureau of Firearms was quoted as saying in the past "about 1,000 guns were sold in California each day. ... Now those numbers have doubled. I've not seen numbers like these since the L.A. riots in 1992."

According to the FBI, this spike in gun sales in California mirrors the national trend. In November of 2008 the number of gun buyer background checks conducted by the Federal Government rose 54 percent as compared with the same period in 2007.

Why is this happening? Some persons think inland and national sales have soared because of fear that a Democratic-controlled Congress and the White House will generate stricter gun controls. Other persons blame it on the poor economy and fear of increasing crime

We've been asked by several citizens - "Should we buy weapons?" We cannot answer that question for you. The second amendment of the US Constitution guarantees your right to own arms. BUT IT HAS TO BE YOUR DECISION.

To help you consider what to do we went to our in-house expert on guns and their use. We asked Sgt. Jim Anderson, the Hemet Police Department Range Master his opinions and information. Following is what he gave us,

Guns in Homes

These are MY opinions. I've been a cop for over twenty years and I'm a department Range Master.

If you are going to have a firearm in the home for protection, you must be proficient with it. That means get to a range and practice shooting, loading, reloading and unloading. You should practice in different conditions such as lighted and low light. Shooting is a perishable skill and you have to practice. Check with NRA for instructors in your area.

Revolvers require less maintenance than a semi-auto pistol. This is a personal choice. You may prefer a rifle or shotgun for personal protection. Use a caliber you are comfortable shooting. A heavy recoiling firearm is not comfortable to shoot and therefore may not get to the range frequently. Likewise, a very small caliber may not be very effective in immediately stopping a threat. Some ranges will let you rent guns to shoot. This may aid in helping select the right gun for you.

Keep in mind some bullets penetrate more than others. If you live in a mobile home park, this could be an issue if a bullet misses its intended target. It can easily go through and into another residence.

If you choose to use a firearm to protect you and your family, you must be mentally prepared to take a life if need be. It is a personal choice and not for everyone. A big mistake is getting a firearm with no intention of using it and brandish it in hopes of scaring an intruder away.

You should check the laws of your state regarding self-defense. They do vary. For example, once an intruder is no longer a threat, you can't just shoot him as he is running away. Remember, you are PROTECTING yourself and your loved ones. If the intruder flees after being confronted, you have accomplished your goal.

Also check laws in regards to storing firearms. They cannot be accessible to children. You are liable for any accidents that occur with an improperly stored firearm. My opinion is to teach children gun safety and introduce them to shooting if they desire when they are mature enough to handle it. This takes the mystery and curiosity factor out of it.

*Sgt. Jim Anderson
Hemet PD*

About the Rise in Crime

Everyone knows the economy has sunk to depths we have not seen in decades. Even our own city budget has been cut, services have been reduced or eliminated, and we have fewer city employees, fewer firemen, and fewer police. We have many, many vacant homes and many people with reduced or no earned income. In view of all this one question on many people's mind is – will crime return with a vengeance?

We don't know. Even experts who have examined our country's history do not agree. But the question is hardly illogical.

In 1987 when the stock market fell, crime exploded to historic highs in the years that followed. In the 1970's a financial crisis led to startling crime rates. According to Richard Rosenfeld, a sociologist at the University of Missouri – St. Louis "Every recession since the late 50's has been associated with an increase in crime and in particular, property crime and robbery." Yet in Los Angeles, Police Chief William J. Bratton was quoted as saying California has been struggling with an ailing economy for some time, but had seen no appreciable rise in crime. And interviews with criminologists, economists and police commanders suggest that in the end it may not happen and they point to crime rates that dropped during the great depression of the 1930's.

No one knows for sure if crime will rise. But one thing we do know is our Valley does not support professional criminals. However, we do have folks who will take advantage of opportunities – opportunities we create when we become careless with our own safety and the safety of our possessions.

Following are two lists of very basic reminders on how to keep ourselves, our families and our community safer from harm.

Out and About

1. Each day as you dress yourself for the events of the day, dress your wallet accordingly. Carry only what you will need. If you do not plan to write a check, do not carry the book. You do not need to carry \$500 if all you are doing is getting a haircut. Carry only the debit/credit cards you plan to use that day. Leave everything else you don't need at home, in a safe place.
2. Carry your wallet in an inside jacket pocket or in a front pants pocket. If you must use your back pocket, place a large wide rubber band around the wallet.
3. Carry a purse close to your body, not dangling by the straps. Also carry the purse on the side away from traffic. If vehicles or pedestrians are on your left side, carry your purse on your right side.
4. Have your vehicle/house keys in your hand before you leave the protection of a building or your vehicle.
5. Drive with your vehicles doors locked and the windows up.
6. If visiting an ATM – carefully verify there are no strange or unusual cameras or devices mounted in the transaction area. Place your other hand slightly over the key pad as you enter your information.

7. When purchasing gasoline for your vehicle, do not use a debit card.
8. When in a parking lot be alert and aware of what is going on around you.
9. Do not give cash to Panhandlers – no matter how sad the story they tell you. Suggest they visit the Salvation Army, the Community Pantry, Valley Restart and/or any other place you know that could help – if they really have that problem. If you were in trouble – wouldn't your family, or friends or church help you? Don't forget to donate to these worthy causes.

At Your Home

1. Verify that all the locks on your doors and windows are intact and working. Add supplemental locks if needed. Use all your locks when you are in your house or out of it.
2. Do not allow strangers you did not invite into your home. A baby's diaper can be changed in a public restroom or the parents' vehicle – they do not need to come inside your house.
3. When you park your vehicle take the keys out of the ignition, close the windows and lock all the doors.
4. Have all regularly incoming checks direct deposited into your bank. Pick up your mail as soon as possible after it is delivered or consider using a locking mail box.
5. Do not let anyone rush you into signing anything – a contract, sales agreement, insurance policy, etc. until you read it carefully. Consider having someone you trust check it over.
6. Make sure your house is well lighted, shrubs and trees are carefully trimmed, your household inventory is up-to-date and your neighborhood network is still intact.
7. How long has it been since you've attended a neighborhood watch program, or held a block party, or gotten together with your neighbors?
8. Have you met the new residents on your block? Would you recognize them if you saw them?
9. Consider working to improve our community's well being. Volunteer as a tutor, group leader or mentor for children in your local school, church or sports venues. Be a neighborhood watch organizer. Join a local social, service, or church group to help better the life in our community.

Of course there is no absolute guarantee that practicing the above noted crime prevention recommendations will prevent you from being a victim. If someone really wants what you have, they will find a way to get it.

However, you will have the satisfaction of knowing you didn't make it easy for the criminal. If someone is going to steal from you, make them work for it.

Local Alerts

Illegal Food Vending Update. In the last issue of this newsletter we alerted you to the fact that one (possibly two persons were going door-to-door trying to persuade the residents to purchase frozen meat. We hear that he (or they) are still in our neighborhoods peddling their meat. We warned you of possible health issues and posed some questions. We've gotten some follow-up information from the County of Riverside we want to share with you.

THE LAW says "it is illegal to sell any food or drink to a retail consumer in Riverside County unless the vendor is permitted by the Riverside County Department of Environmental Health. Sanitary practices and approved food sources are enforced in order for a vendor to be permitted." All legal carts and trucks selling food must have a permit decal displayed on one side of the vehicle. CHOOSE CAREFULLY! Only buy food from legal food vendors. Look for the permit decal.

If you believe you have gotten sick or would like to report an illegal vending business, you can contact the Illegal Food Programs at (951) 358-5172; or on the WEB at www.rivcoeh.org. All complaints are handled confidentially.

From the Lake Hemet Municipal Water District. "Be aware. Persons identifying themselves as water company employees requesting to test your water in an effort to sell water purification devices are not LHMWD employees. Our employees carry distinctive district identification."

Think about this statement for a minute. These guys could pretend to be any water company employees. And, if they lie about whom they work for just to get into your house, - what else will they lie about?

We suggest – if you are interested in water purification devices – check out several local vendors before you purchase one. Who knows, there may be all kinds of devices you like better, And, perhaps you may purchase it at a better price.

Telephone Sales Sweepstakes. You pick up your phone and you hear you have won the right to be entered in a \$1000 free grocery sweepstakes if you order some product or service offered by a local merchant.

Know that if you are listed on the Federal Do Not Call List it is illegal for a Telemarketer to call you. If you are on the DNC list you may tell the telemarketer if they call again you will report them to the Federal Trade Commission.

If you are not registered on the DNC list and would like to be, simply call toll-free 1-888-382-1222; TTY 1-866-653-4261 or go to the WEB site at <http://www.ftc.gov>.

The \$1000 grocery sweepstakes may sound tempting but remember it's a lottery. Also remember the service or product may not be up to your standards. We suggest if you are interested in the service or product offered ask your family and friends for their favorites. Then compare.

Telephone Scam Updates

Sweepstakes/lotteries. A few years ago sweepstakes/lotteries scams were made famous by criminals working out of Nigeria. Now it seems they were so successful the whole world is getting in on the act.

Jamaican gangs are now targeting the U.S. with lottery scams. (We have recently heard some are also coming from Hong Kong and Australia.)

Here is how they work. You receive a phone call saying you have won one or more million dollars in an oversea lottery. But, before you can collect your prize you must wire "x" number of dollars to cover taxes, or the administrative fees, or the handling fee, or whatever else the scammer can convince you they need. Your payment only leads to more requests for more payments. Sometimes when the victims try to recover their losses, other scammers will pose as "police". And the "police" say they need cash to aid in the investigation.

What You Should Know. Federal laws regarding sweepstakes/lotteries say:

1. U.S. citizens may not participate in foreign lotteries. (Most of these lotteries don't even exist. One exception – the lottery in Spain does exist. However their laws confine lottery players only to citizens of Spain and no lottery winnings are permitted to leave their country.)
2. When winning a lottery/sweepstakes U.S. federal law also states NO UPFRONT FEES CAN BE COLLECTED by anyone. If any taxes are due, they are collected after you receive your prize. And then only by the IRS. The IRS does not delegate their authority to any outsider.

We suggest it might be better to keep your lottery play inside the U.S. Here at least if you are scammed – real police will pursue the investigation without charging a fee.

Grandchildren Calling from Canada. You may receive a phone call from someone claiming to be your grandchild (or someone who says they are calling for your grandchild.) They claim they (the child) is in some kind of trouble (stranded, injured, arrested, in hospital, etc.) and they need money quickly. Grab a pencil and paper, ask as many questions as you can think of and write it all down.

BUT, before you send any money – verify. You may call the grandchild directly – if you have their cell phone number. Or you can call family members or friends to make sure the grandchild is indeed in Canada.

The Better Business Bureau and several state attorney generals warn that people are being conned by grandchildren callers. Many grandparents have sent hundreds, sometimes thousands of dollars to “save a child” only to learn it was a scam.

We suggest if you learn your grandchild is safe at home or at least not in Canada, you might want to give the information you wrote down to the Hemet Police Department.

For More Information Calls. At a recent local seminar the California Department of Communications issued the following alert. If you receive a phone call with a recorded message concerning an offer or opportunity of some kind and the message ends in “for more information on this offer or opportunity push the #1 or #2 key on your phone” - BEWARE. You may be releasing your phone line to a foreign country. The result may be a huge phone bill and you have to pay it because you took the action.

Answering Missed Phone Calls. You’ve been busy and away from your phone (cell or hard wire) for awhile, so you check your messages. You see one or two area codes you do not recognize. Before returning any call to an unfamiliar area code it will be to your advantage to learn where the area code is located. Telephone companies are noticing a pattern of calls that ring once or twice and then disconnect. When you check your missed messages the return message appears to be a domestic number. However, when you return the call you may be connected to an adult entertainment chat room in the Turks and Caicos Islands (area code 649) outside the reach of U.S. regulators. Some customers have been billed for expensive international calls and chat line charges.

This is not new. It is a variation of an old scam we alerted you to several times in the past. Other area codes we have alerted you to (also in the Caribbean Sea) are 809, 868, 876, 758, 664, 473, 441 and 246. If you call these area codes to respond to a message – chances are a whopping toll charge will be added to your phone bill. You made the call – you have to pay for it. There is no recourse.

If you never telephone people outside of the United States ask your carrier to block outgoing international calls.

Some frauds Tied to the Economic Slowdown

From the FDIC Consumer News.

1. Scams tied to the Obama Administration's economic stimulus package.

The Federal Trade Commission has warned about fraudulent Web sites and e-mails asking consumers for bank account, credit card and other personal information supposedly for help getting money from the stimulus fund, or for direct deposit of government payments.

Instead, these scammers are collecting information to make unauthorized charges to credit cards or to withdraw money from bank accounts.

For more information go to: www.ftc.gov/opa/2009/03/stimuluscam.shtm

2. **Bogus "help" with credit and debt problems.** In some cases con artists "guarantee" loan approvals to people with credit problems, then they disappear after collecting a non-refundable fee and without delivering any service. Others involve companies that advertise credit counseling or a promise to settle debt for less than is owed. They charge high fees and provide little or no assistance.

Try to deal only with lenders, businesses and other organizations you already know or have been recommended.

3. **Con artists preying on people who need jobs.** One common example involves attractive offers to work part-time from home, but the end result is that the new "employer" commits identity theft or check fraud. Another involves "mystery shoppers" programs for which consumers are supposedly hired to report on their experience doing business at a retailer, but instead lose money in a fake check scam.

You can protect yourself from these and other financial scams by being extremely skeptical of unsolicited offers that involve "updating" or "confirming" personal information or requirements that you send a payment, or provide bank account information before receiving anything in return.

Also walk away from any offer from a stranger that would involve a large check to be deposited into your account and instructions to wire any of that money back, perhaps to someone in another country. In this type of scam, victims may end up owing thousands of dollars to the financial institution that wired the money. For more information go to:

<http://www.fdic.gov/consumers/consumer/news/cnwin0809/scams.html>

HEMET POLICE WANTS TO HEAR FROM YOU

YOU HAVE A QUESTION? WE HAVE ANSWERS

Send your comments, suggestions, questions, or just interesting thoughts to the Hemet Police Department. We might even publish them in a future edition of the Quarterly Newsletter. Reach us at:

**Hemet Police Department
Neighborhood Watch, R. Moyer
450 East Latham Avenue
Hemet, CA 92543**

**Phone
(951) 765-2415**

**E-Mail
rmoyer@citvofhemet.ora**

**Fax
(951) 765-2412**

NON-EMERGENCY Help Lines

In the February, 2009 issue of this newsletter we gave ou an update on the new laws for 9-1-1. Almost as an afterthought we included a list of important, but non-emergency telephone numbers that can be useful. The feedback from that list was so favorable that we have decided to keep it updated.

REMEMBER always use 9-1-1 if: someone's life is in danger right now; if there is a crime going on right now; to report a fire, toxic materials, etc.; if you need other help right now; if you need professional police, fire or ambulance service right now.

For **NON-EMERGENCY SERVICES** – requiring police, fire, ambulance services see below.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU,
BUT NOT ON THE 9-1-1 LINES

Please use our traditional, non-emergency telephone lines.

NON 911-EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS

- **Hemet Police**
(951) 765-2400
- **R.C. SHERRIFF**
1-800-950-2444
or
(951) 791-3400
- **REPORT GRAFFITI**
(951) 765-2309
- **HEMET FIRE**
(951) 765-2450
- **COUNTY FIRE**
(951) 654-7912
- **CALIFORNIA HIGHWAY PATROL**
(951) 652-2061
- **A.M.R. AMBULANCE**
(951) 658-2826
- **SAN JACINTO POLICE**
(951) 654-2702
- **CRIME PREVENTION/ NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH**
(951) 765-2415

For other personal emergencies or emergencies not served by 9-1-1, first try asking the people in your church for help. Many of our Valley churches provide outstanding assistance for our people. If that does not work for you, consult the HELP LINE pages in your telephone directory or contact one of the following agencies:

- **COMMUNITY PANTRY**
(951) 929-1101
- **INFORM RIVERSIDE INFORMATION AND REFERRAL**
2-1-1
- **SALVATION ARMY**
(951) 766-2020
- **RIVERSIDE COUNTY OFFICE ON AGING**
1-800-510-2020
- **HEMET FOOD CENTER**
(951) 658-8987
- **HEALTHY ELDER LIFE PROGRAM (HELP)**
1-888-983-5337
- **VALLEY RESTART**
(951) 658-8987
- **ANGELS OF THE VALLEY**
(951) 927-7428