

Don't be a victim

Sisters is still a very safe area — but that doesn't mean it's crime-free. The Deschutes County Sheriff's Office offers some basic precautions that can go a long way toward ensuring that you aren't a victim of a crime in Sisters.

- Out of sight, out of mind. Keep your valuables covered in your car.
- Remove valuables from your car when you're home and always lock your car.
- When away from home keep doors and windows locked.
- Be aware of your surroundings and who's in the neighborhood and in your own personal space
- See Something Say Something: Report anything suspicious in a timely manner. Officers need to know right away if a crime occurs.
- Be neighborly and watch out for each other.
- Install video surveillance at your home. Cameras make it harder for criminals, and often they'll go to an easier location.
- Install motion lights and keep your home and outbuildings well-lit at night. (Be aware of Sisters' dark-skies ordinance; lights must be directed downward.)
- Sign up for 911 Citizen Alert Registration (emergency alerts on your cell phone) at <https://sheriff.deschutes.org/community/crime-prevention/911-citizen-alert/>.

CRIME: Watching out for thefts and scams in Sisters

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very dark back of the house and walk along our narrow sidewalk right up against the house. I could have touched him if the window had been open!" said Wendie.

Sisters is growing, and with growth comes the potential for more crime. The days of unlocked cars with the keys left in the ignition are quickly receding. Many folks in Sisters pride themselves on not even knowing where their house keys are. Break-ins and theft were so rare it didn't seem necessary to take the time to lock up the house or personal belongings in the backyard.

But Sisters does see incidences of theft.

Habitat for Humanity Site Supervisor Larry Lennon commented on the nonprofit organization's loss of a trash trailer at one of their job sites.

"Someone came in one night and stole the trailer full of trash. All of our big trailers have locks on the hitches. Since this incident, we've put locks on everything," said Lennon.

Locals are beginning to think more about security — especially those who have lost property or had a close call.

"We are taking more precautions with our tools now. We keep them locked up in a

fenced area on the job site," said Lennon.

Sergeant William Bailey is the Public Information Officer for the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office. During his career in law enforcement he has been a detective and street officer. In his current position, he's a resource for getting the word out about crime prevention and programs designed to support the community.

He explained that a misdemeanor like theft from vehicles doesn't end with the initial crime. There's a ripple effect that escalates to bigger things and headaches for the victims. Identity theft, firearms being stolen and credit card theft are much more serious crimes with bigger ramifications.

When the public helps out, it's easier to solve crimes.

"When we learn that stolen credit cards are being used in Central Oregon, we use social media to identify those people. We turn to the public with a clip or video to help our investigation of all kinds of crime. When we partner with the community it helps us reduce or solve crime," said Bailey.

Scams are an on-going problem in Central Oregon and beyond. Most of the calls originate outside of Deschutes County, sometimes even overseas. One scammer pretended they were calling from the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office.

"We take it personally when we're named in the scams," said Bailey. "We

solved one that originated in an East Coast prison. We flew back and caught them."

The best remedy for scams is an educated public.

"We can't stop it completely, but we can educate people so they don't fall for one," said Bailey.

A solution is complicated. Some people will fall for them, especially when scammers constantly change the scam to try and get another hook in.

"Be suspicious of anyone over the phone who asks you for money or information," said Bailey.

Statistics for crimes committed in locations with a Sisters address fluctuate and are sometimes hard to decipher. Cases of criminal mischief have gone down in the last three years with 47 cases in 2015, 30 in 2016 and 19 in 2017. But according to Bailey, those numbers can be misleading.

"In 2015, that could be something as simple as several mailboxes being vandalized on a street. Each address would have their own case number," he said.

Thefts have fluctuated with 71 reported in 2015, 57 in 2016 and 80 in 2017. Burglaries held steady at 13 in 2015 and 2016, with an increase to 17 last year. There were eight reports of thefts from vehicles in 2015, 22 in 2016 and 17 last year. Sergeant Bailey said that July is a busy month for car break-ins.

One often devastating and easily preventable crime is

DUI. In 2015 there were four DUI arrests, 19 in 2016 and 23 in 2017.

Tourism, warmer weather and an increase in alcohol use all contribute to an increase in crime. Decision-making goes down when alcohol is present. The overall increase in population equals a higher crime level. As we get closer to the busy summer season, now's the time for residents to think about ways to make it harder for crimes to be committed.

With one full-time sheriff's deputy in the Sisters area, Bailey says it's imperative to work in partnership with other agencies.

"We work together with US Forest Service, BLM, Oregon State Police as well as the Black Butte Ranch police force and our school resource officer," he said.

This year a bike patrol officer will be in Sisters. A deputy will work full-time during busy times like events and holidays.

"It will be great to have a second person in the area," said Bailey. "There's a unique advantage when you're on a bike. We can get around town more easily when it's busy."

Neighbors like the Vermillions hope others will hear their story and take some precautions.

"We've had not further incidents," said Wendie. "We have all been quite trusting and complacent until now, but we are working harder at locking doors and checking things since then."

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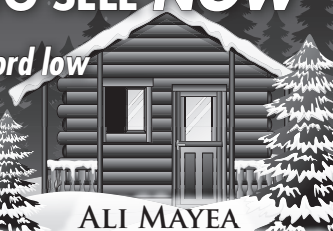


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