



# NEWS RELEASE

## HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF POLICE OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

For Release: July 20, 2004

Contacts: PFC Richard Malcolm  
(410) 313-2236

### **Police Warn of Scam Operators**

Howard County Police are cautioning residents, especially the elderly, to be alert to traveling criminal groups that are committing crimes in the area.

Groups of transient criminals are responsible for numerous diversionary-type thefts, burglaries and other scams. The thefts usually involve people posing as utility workers who knock on doors, divert a homeowner's attention and steal cash or jewelry. Sometimes the thieves will enter a home through an unlocked door while a resident is doing yard work.

Other popular scams among transient criminal groups involve telling a homeowner they have leftover asphalt from a previous job and quote the homeowner a "bargain price." The scam artists will complete the job using low-grade materials, tell the resident that it cost more to complete the task and demand more money. They may also add hidden charges for landscaping work, such as advising a resident that trimming per tree will cost one low amount and when the bill comes, the resident is charged per limb.

The following tips are advised for residents:

- Always lock your doors, even when you are doing yard work.
- Verify identification of utility workers by calling the company and be suspicious of anyone who comes to your home without an appointment.
- Never allow strangers into your house.
- Keep in mind that legitimate paving companies usually do not go door to door to solicit business.
- Legitimate contractors will have you sign a contract.
- If you are approached by anyone you suspect is trying to defraud or rob you, attempt to get a license plate number, description of the suspects and call 911.

###