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**THE SALEM CITY  
CRIME PREVENTION  
CONNECTION**

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## What Channel Am I On?

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There has been a lot of focus lately on distracted driving because of cell phone usage, texting and other hand-held electronics. While these devices can and do cause accidents because of persons paying attention to them instead of the road, there are still many other items (and people) within your vehicle that can cause a distraction and shouldn't be ignored... well actually, they *should* be ignored!

**I can't stand that song!** How many times have you been driving down the road and a song is played on your favorite radio station that you just can't stand? You've heard it one time, you've heard it a thousand times and it's just something you never want to hear again! So it's time to switch the channel.

You look down and realize that the channel you want to switch to is not on your presets and you need to filter through all the channels to find just the right one. Those moments of your eyes wandering down to your stereo can be the difference between being *able* to stop and not. Keep in mind, your vehicle that is travelling at 60 miles per hour is covering 88 feet of roadway each second. An average car is about 14 feet in length, which means you're traveling more than 6 car lengths in just 1 second! Now that sounds fast.

So those little "everyday" distractions that happen while driving can make a big difference in your safety, you family's safety and those around you in other vehicles, on bicycles and out walking. Take some time to talk with the passengers in your car and explain how even in a second or two of inattention, you car has travelled a long distance (almost half of a football field in two seconds). If there was some stationary object, person or animal in the roadway it may just be too late to stop.

This also brings up the importance of a safe following distance between you and the vehicle in front of you. Keeping that safe distance that will give you the time necessary to stop is critical because you never know what inadvertent distractions may occur that takes your attention away from where it should be when behind the wheel. Don't forget that your following distance also must increase with inclement weather conditions as your vehicle will not stop as fast or be as responsive on slippery, wet, roadways.

Pay Attention – Drive Safe!

## HOME SECURITY 101

### Access - At The Push of a Button

Electric garage door openers can be a very beneficial convenience. Whether you use them to open the door and allow you to pull into your garage or your garage is filled with a few "other" items and it's just a pathway into your home, it's convenient and keeps your hands free to carry in the groceries.

However, they can also be a target for a thief who wants to gain access to your garage or possibly your home. Leaving your remote control in your vehicle announces to would-be thieves that there is a "key" to your garage ripe for the picking and just maybe an unlocked door between your garage and your home, which can be even more enticing. For some thieves, this is just the temptation they need and a quick tap to a car window, reaching in and taking the remote is just what works for them.





**One push of the button and they're in!** While you may not have a lot of valuables stored in your garage, the loss of anything can be disheartening and inconvenient. Also, if there is another vehicle parked in the garage this gives thieves the opportunity to work in secret as they burglarize the vehicle and take its stereo or other items.

If you're up-town and parked with your remote control visible it can still be a temptation. A tap and break of the window and the thief will have access to your garage, but how do they know where you live? A registration slip, piece of mail or any item left in your vehicle can be all that they need to figure out exactly where they are going and in the time it takes you to finish shopping for the week's groceries, they're done picking up their "goods" from your garage (and maybe even your home).

Speaking of your home, don't forget that door between the garage and the house (if you have an attached garage). It can be tempting to leave the door unlocked making easy access for YOU. Unfortunately it also makes easy access for THEM. Keep doors between garages and houses secured and locked!

No garage? There's still a lesson to be learned! Leaving items in your vehicle that provide your address could be what a burglar needs to do their thieving! Thinking like a criminal, consider this...

*It's a busy night and there are scads of shoppers in every line at the grocery store. The burglar notices this and begins to plot his move. He goes outside and watches each of the cars pull in. What's that? A shopper just going into the store with a long list of items to buy. The burglar thinks to himself that he may have just found a victim. He goes to the shopper's car and breaks the window. Inside there's nothing of value worth taking (good job, on the part of the shopper!) However, the vehicle's registration is sitting in the glove box with the local address. The burglar looks at his watch and realizes that he probably has at least an hour before the shopper finishes and drives home; it's the perfect night to burglarize an unoccupied home.*

Don't leave items in an unsecured location within your vehicle that have your address or other personal information on them. It can be a ticket to commit a crime.

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## The Schoolyard Bully



Probably most every adult remembers an incident of being bullied when they were younger. Maybe it happened at school, the park or the neighborhood. Sometimes the "bully" was an older sibling, other times it may have been barely an acquaintance, but someone made someone feel intimidated and uncomfortable. While it may be something that happens relatively frequently, it's not something that has to happen.

There are many examples of heart wrenching outcomes of bullying incidents, where they either ended in someone being hurt or even killed, to instances of those who are victimized taking their own life to "escape" the pain. The unfortunate story of Phoebe Prince, a 15 year-old girl from South Hadley, Massachusetts received national attention and shock when it was revealed that she took her own life purportedly due to months of bullying and harassment by fellow students. This sad incident brought new legislation in Massachusetts to prevent and prosecute those involved in bullying incidents.

### Listen to your Children!

While many young people can be "silent victims" of bullying, there can be telltale signs. These warnings could be a child who refuses to walk a certain route to school, attempts to keep you from looking at their electronic communications (email, social networking), asks for special pickup or drop off spots, has unexplained injuries or damage to their property, they are purposely waiting to use the restroom until they return home from school, their interest in school lessens or they have a change in their relationship with other children. Certainly, not every one of these concerns indicates they are being bullied, but it may be a red-flag warning and it's time to look into why they are feeling or acting they way they are.

Have open discussions with your children and let them know that bullying is not okay and that whether they are a victim, or they are mistreating someone else, it will not be tolerated and could even lead to criminal or legal action. Talk with school officials if you feel your child is being targeted by others. Informing them will help to address the problem.



If there is an obvious time or location where these incidents may be occurring (outside of school) find opportunities to be there. Granted, this can be difficult for older children who want to try and handle the situation on their own or keep it secret, but finding those opportunities of (your) presence can be a good deterrent. Talk with other parents and encourage the buddy system so that your child always has a friend or two around when out walking or doing other activities where they may be susceptible to the inappropriate behavior of bullies.

#### **I think my child is bullying others...**

The first step in response has taken place: you're aware and you are concerned! This is important because many times as parents we don't want to believe that *our* child would be capable of such things. However, even children from wonderful families and loving environments can become bullies.

Just as a parent of a victim of bullying would do, it's important that the parent of a child who is bullying begin talking with their child. Communication is critical in understanding why they are doing what they do. As part of this process, take a look at your family environment. Is there a reason that your child is acting this way and can something be done?

Talk with your child's teachers and school authorities. Discuss with them your concerns and strategize ways in which you can work together to help your young person and provide them outlets to reduce their inner need for intimidation and control of others.

For some that bully, it's a way to express dominance over others and demonstrate their authority and inflate (or prop up) their self-esteem. As adults, we know this is not healthy, but to a child coping with many of the pressures children face, this may not be as obvious to them. Provide specific rules and expectations with appropriate consequences. Work with them to find other ways in which they can demonstrate their personal strengths and abilities that don't end in another person being offended or hurt.

Seek professional assistance if needed. Many counselors and mental health professionals have the right mix of compassion, understanding and professional knowledge to help you not alienate your child because of their action, but rather help them understand their behavior is unacceptable.

#### **Attention Parents!**

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has prepared an excellent resource tool for parents and fun online activities for kids in preventing and responding to incidents of bullying. Visit [www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov](http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov) to find ways in which you and your children can help stop these terrible acts that can have unimaginable consequences.

#### **The Monthly 2do List**



#### **What's on Your Phone?**



Cell phones, smart phones, PDA's...they're part of everyday life for many people. For some, they are the collection and storage point of some of our most personal and private pieces of information.

Now imagine if you lost that phone and information along with it...and your phone was not in a "locked" or password protected status? It could be devastating! For those who use their phone all day, many times during the day, it can become a hassle to keep inputting a password or number, but there's no telling when just by chance you leave the phone or it drops out of a pocket or in a moment of distraction someone snatches it. It could and does happen.

The remedy is simple, lock it and secure it! Go and check your electronic communications and storage device today and see if you can lock others out just in the chance your phone falls into their hands. Another security measure is to take a closer look at what is in your phone and whether it really needs to be there. A text or an email from another family member sharing a password, a bank account or other personal information may be just what's needed for an unscrupulous person who finds your phone and begins to think of ways to use your information. Check out your phone today and make it secure!



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