

Better Business Bureau: 6 steps to stop porch pirates this holiday season

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Milwaukee, Wis. – The rise of online marketplaces and expedited delivery services is a convenient service for many consumers across the nation, allowing holiday purchasers to search out the perfect gift for friends and family. Unfortunately, purchasing and having the item delivered to the proper address does not guarantee you will receive it. According to market research firm C+R Research, package theft continues to be an issue for many Americans, with approximately one-quarter (23%) of consumers experiencing package theft in 2021.

Package thieves, also known as “porch pirates,” often take advantage of an opportunity and may frequent a neighborhood or community multiple times before moving on to another. They will often target houses that provide a quick in-and-out route, especially if the porch or area where packages are delivered is within 25 feet of the street and are easily visible. Over the past five years, internet searches using the keywords “package stolen” nearly doubled during December, demonstrating the impact of this crime on households across the nation.

As a crime of opportunity, preventing or discouraging package theft can be accomplished in several ways, depending on the location of your residence, type and community. For instance, preventing package theft at an apartment complex in the middle of the city differs from a suburban residential community. However, consumers can use specific strategies to discourage the act no matter where they live.

BBB provides the following tips to prevent package thieves from affecting your holiday plans (and the rest of the year):

- **Check with neighbors.** Sometimes, your package may not be stolen at all, just simply at the wrong address. Before filing a report or contacting the sender, check with your neighbors and see if the delivery service may have dropped off your package at the wrong address. Many delivery companies will take pictures of your package in the designated location – be sure to check for the photo and verify it is at the right spot.
- **Don't leave unattended packages.** When possible, do not leave delivered packages unattended for long periods. If you are expecting a package, attempt to schedule its delivery when you know you will be home. Ask your neighbors if they would mind holding on to packages delivered if you plan to be gone for an extended time during the holidays.
- **Ship to store.** If purchasing an item from a retailer that has a physical location near your home, consider shipping it there instead. Retailers will require proof of purchase or identification before releasing packages they have received, and this is a sure way to avoid porch pirates.
- **Use a security camera.** Installing a home security system with cameras or simply a camera-enabled doorbell is a great way to deter package theft, especially when highly visible. Consider including a sign that specifically states that the residence is under surveillance. Even if a package is stolen from your porch, the video evidence will help law enforcement track down the thieves.
- **Require a signature.** Many delivery companies include the option to require a signature before leaving a package, letting you take physical possession of the item as soon as it is delivered. While this option works well for those who are often at home, especially for expensive items, it may create difficulties in receiving packages if your schedule and the delivery service are different. Be sure to check with the delivery company on their policy for packages that are not signed for; they may return it to the sender after a certain number of attempts.
- **Consider a package receiving service.** Some major retailers, such as Amazon, offer secure package receiving locations away from your home that you can access with a key or code. Some independent businesses also specialize in this service, allowing you to designate a different delivery location for your packages and the ability to pick them up on your way home.

If you fear that your package has been stolen, file a report with your local police department and the delivery company. Depending on which delivery service you use, they may offer insurance or other policies to reimburse you for your losses.

For more resources and tips on how to avoid scams this holiday season, visit **BBB.org/Holiday**.

Report scams to BBB Scam Tracker.

For more information or further inquiries, contact the Wisconsin BBB at www.bbb.org/wisconsin, 414-847-6000 or 1-800-273-1002. Consumers also can find more information about how to protect themselves from scams by following the Wisconsin BBB on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.

ABOUT BBB: For more than 100 years, the Better Business Bureau has been helping people find businesses, brands and charities they can trust. In 2020, people turned to BBB more than 220 million times for BBB Business Profiles on 6.2 million businesses and Charity Reports on 11,000 charities, all available for free at BBB.org. There are local, independent BBBs across the United States, Canada and Mexico, including BBB Serving Wisconsin which was founded in 1939 and serves the state of Wisconsin.