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October is National Crime Prevention Month

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Submitted by Dee Loflin, SMT Manager/Editor

Missouri - The Missouri State Highway Patrol joins the National Crime Prevention Council in observing October 2013 as National Crime Prevention Month. It is always smart to keep safety in mind, no matter where you are. Missourians can help decrease crime with these simple habits: Anticipate potential crime situations; recognize when there is a problem; and, take action to remove or reduce the risk of a crime occurring. The Patrol urges residents and visitors to be alert and think safety!

Identity Theft:

Once you realize you've become a victim of identity theft:

- * Notify the credit bureaus, your creditors, your bank, and law enforcement.
- * Notify the local postal inspector if you suspect an identity thief has filed a change of address with the post office or has used the mail to commit credit or bank fraud.
- * In dealing with the authorities and financial institutions, keep a log of all conversations, including dates, times, names, and phone numbers. Note the time spent and any expenses incurred. Confirm conversations in writing. Send correspondence by certified mail (return receipt requested). Keep copies of all letters and documents.
- * If someone is using your driver's license number from your stolen checks,

you may need to contact the Missouri Department of Revenue's Fraud Unit.

* If you have a passport, notify the passport office in writing to be on the lookout for anyone ordering a new passport fraudulently.

For more detailed information, the Patrol has included a brochure on identity theft on its Web site: **www.mshp.dps.mo.gov**. (Select "brochures" under the "publications" heading.)

Home:

* Make sure you have good locks on all exterior doors--at least dead-bolt locks with a minimum of one-inch throw.

* Make sure your windows have strong locks.

* Use the locks you have.

* Secure sliding glass doors with commercially available bars or locks, or, put a wooden dowel or broom handle in the door track.

* Porches, entrances, and outside areas should be well lighted.

* Trim any bushes or trees that hide doors or windows. Maintain your yard and keep ladders and tools inside when they are not in use.

* Don't hide a house key under the doormat or in a flowerpot. That's the first place a burglar will look! Give a key to a trusted neighbor instead.

*Consider an alarm system.

In Missouri, a burglary occurred every 12.4 minutes in 2012. (Statistic from Missouri State Highway Crime In Missouri report.)

Car:

* Always lock your car and take the keys, even if you plan to return in a short time. One motor vehicle theft occurred every 32.3 minutes. (Statistic from Missouri State Highway Patrol Crime In Missouri report.)

* Keep your car in good running condition to avoid breakdowns.

* If your car breaks down, raise the hood or tie a white cloth to the street side

door handle. Stay in your locked car. Call *55 on your cellular telephone to reach the nearest Missouri State Highway Patrol headquarters and ask for assistance. If you don't have a cell phone with you, wait in your car. If someone stops and offers assistance, ask them to make the call for you.

- * NEVER pick up hitchhikers.

- * Park in well-lighted areas that will remain lighted until you return to your car. Be particularly alert when using enclosed parking garages.

Children:

- * Teach your children how to use the telephone properly in an emergency situation.

- * Make sure your children know their name, address, phone number, and your work number.

- * Teach your children to walk and play with friends, not alone.

- * Tell your children to refuse rides or gifts from someone they don't know well.

- * Teach your children to tell a trusted adult immediately if anyone, even a teacher or close relative, touches them in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable.

- * Remind your children to leave the door locked if they are home alone. They shouldn't answer the door if you're not there.

- * Teach your children never to tell anyone they are home alone, especially over the phone.

Parents are encouraged to listen to their children's worries and problems. Talk to them. Make sure you know where your children are going, who they will be with, and when they will return. Know their friends' names and phone numbers.

There are other ways to prevent crime. Education through your schools and Neighborhood Watch groups are good first steps. The Missouri State Highway

Patrol has public information and education officers assigned to each troop headquarters and the Division of Drug and Crime Control. These troopers are available to present at church groups, schools, and companies. Headquarters if you would like a safety officer.

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Remember: Anticipate ... Recognize ... Take action.

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