



## Ramsey County Sheriff's Office

## Neighborhood Watch

Bob Fletcher, Sheriff

### Public Safety Services Division – Crime Prevention Unit

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Neighbors and Deputies working together for safer communities

## Block Captain News – March 2023

Next Meeting Tuesday, April 18 – 6:30 pm

Ramsey County Public Works Building - Marsden Room  
1425 Paul Kirkwold Drive, Arden Hills MN 55112  
Near intersection of Highway 96 and Hamline

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- Traffic safety initiatives
- Social media platforms
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- Online quiz dangers
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### In-person meeting – reserve Tuesday 4/18/23 on your calendar

The Crime Prevention team has reserved the Marsden Room at the Ramsey County Public Works building in Arden Hills for Tuesday, April 18, 2023, to host our Neighborhood Watch Block Captains quarterly meeting. Topics will include traffic enforcement and traffic stop questions, and current events. We look forward to seeing those able to attend, the meeting will start at 6:30 pm and will run until 8:00 pm.



### Enhanced DWI Enforcement planned in month of March

The Minnesota Toward Zero Deaths Initiative will be supporting extra patrols and special enforcement efforts to take drunk and impaired drivers off our roads during March.

The best plan to stay safe is to not drink and drive. If you drink, plan a sober ride.

### April is National Distracted Driving Month

Distracted driving is any activity that diverts attention from safe driving. This includes talking on your phone, eating, and drinking, talking to people in your vehicle, fiddling with the entertainment or navigation system.



The Minnesota Toward Zero Deaths Enforcement effort will be focused on Distracted Driving in April. During this time there will be extra patrol efforts focused on hands free and wireless communication compliance.

Key prevention tip: don't hold your phone in your hand when driving,

including while stopped at a traffic light.



**HANDS-FREE MINNESOTA LAW**  
HandsFreeMN.org

## Nextdoor and social media apps



At our January meeting we had a lively conversation surrounding how neighbors and neighborhoods can and do communicate about local events and public safety. The use of social media and various apps was discussed, and experiences were shared.

Nextdoor is a private social network for neighborhoods that was founded in 2008. It is a place that allows neighbors to build strong connections with one another, look out for the community's safety and share services or recommendations.



The platform is free to join, and there are no upfront or hidden costs. It is supported by advertising. The app is based on very local address selections and moderators do attempt to keep conversations local and civil. Each member must verify their address to join, use their real name, and all personal information is safeguarded from third parties. You can choose not to make your exact house number public, which is suggested for safety.

The app creators promote that you can use Nextdoor to find missing pets, report suspicious activities, and organize local gatherings.

Government interaction with Nextdoor, including law enforcement, is limited to one-way posting of information to select neighborhood groups within their jurisdiction if allowed by the app moderator. Government agencies cannot see what is posted by individuals, responses, or inquiries. When reports of suspicious activities or inquiries about activities are posted to Nextdoor they are not seen by law enforcement. The only way to report something to law enforcement is to actually call and report it.

There are always some risks involved when using social media. We have all heard the stories about the neighbor next door posting on Facebook to let the world know that they are on a month-long vacation only to come home and find their house has been burglarized.

Scammers can post on Nextdoor pretending to offer a service that they have no intention of carrying out. You really need to know your neighborhood, especially online.

For example, a dishonest individual looking to scam others could create a post about a handyman on the Nextdoor website asking for \$500 in upfront gift card money before they can get to work. Then, after the payment has been made, you will never hear from them again.

### **Before hiring or donating to any person who posts on Nextdoor, or any other social media platform, make sure to:**

- **Listen to your instincts.** Whether you are arranging to pick up an item you have bought from a neighbor or hiring a contractor, trust your intuition. If something does not feel right, it usually is not.
- **Do not pay anyone you have not met in person.** Scammers will sometimes ask members to accept or make gift card payments or pay through a third-party app. But you should not accept an arrangement that you are not sure about or is unusual. Before proceeding, ask yourself, "Who are my neighbors?"
- **Never give out your personal information.** Your financial information or personal information that is very uniquely yours should not be shared. No one has any business asking for your bank account number, social security number, passport, or ID online.
- **Alert your neighbors about a negative experience.** If you have been the victim or the attempted target of a scam or fraud, let your neighbors know by authoring a post with your Nextdoor review on the main newsfeed. You can also reply to recommendations or questions about that specific individual or business in the main newsfeed.

The level of safety and community interaction you enjoy on Nextdoor will depend on you. If you stick to using Nextdoor to find out about neighborhood occurrences and start casual conversations, you should be fine.

National Consumer Protection Week • March 5–11 #NCPW2023  
How to Spot, Avoid, and Report Scams

Learn — and teach others —  
how to spot, avoid, and report scams.

[ftc.gov/MoneyMatters](https://ftc.gov/MoneyMatters)

Icons: Mailbox, Bank, Credit, Car, Shopping cart, Job, House, Money.

## Top Scams in 2022

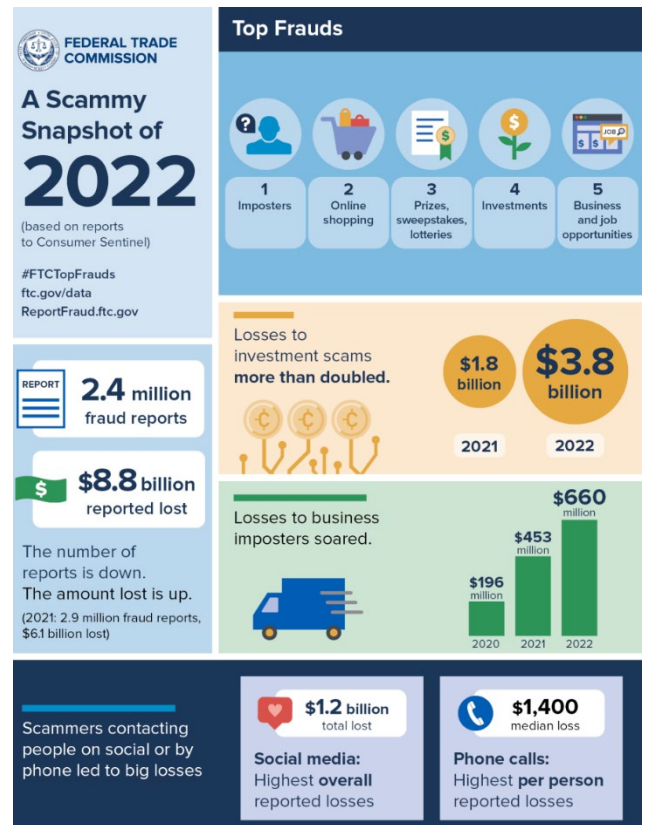
The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) collects information and reports on frauds, scams, and bad business practices.

The 2022 headline is this: scammers took a LOT of money. The latest FTC data book says people reported losing \$8.8 billion to scams. That's \$2.6 billion more than 2021. Except the number of reports are down by half a million (2022: 2.4 million reports. 2021: 2.9 million reports).

Highlights of the report:

- Investment scams reported losses of \$3.8 billion
- Impersonator scams were most reported scams with losses of \$2.6 billion, more business impersonator scams reported.
- When the scam started on social media, people reported the most money lost overall at \$1.2 billion.
- Phone scams led to highest per-person loss.

Link to full report: <https://consumer.ftc.gov/consumer-alerts/2023/02/top-scams-2022>



## Could that online quiz lead to identity theft?

What do the model of your first car, your favorite hobby, and the high school you attended have in common? If you said they're questions commonly used for online account security and online quizzes, you're correct! Before you take a quiz to find out which Marvel character you are, ask yourself: Do I know who's gathering this information about me — or what they plan to do with it?

Personality tests, quick surveys, and other types of online quizzes ask seemingly harmless questions, but the more information you share, the more you risk it being misused. Scammers could do a lot of damage with just a few answers that give away your personal information. We've heard about scammers [phishing](#) for answers to security question data through quizzes. They use your quiz answers to try and reset your accounts, letting them steal your bank and other account information. Some scammers [hack social media accounts](#) and [send malware links to friends](#) of the hacked account holder under the guise of sharing a quiz.

One major way to protect your personal information — in addition to maintaining strong passwords and using multi-factor authentication — is to steer clear of online quizzes...or just don't answer them truthfully.

As for accounts that require actual security questions, treat them like additional passwords and use random answers, preferably long ones, for those too. Asked to enter your mother's maiden name? Say it's something else:

Parmesan or another word you'll remember. Or use a password manager to store a unique answer. This way, scammers won't be able to use information they find to steal your identity.

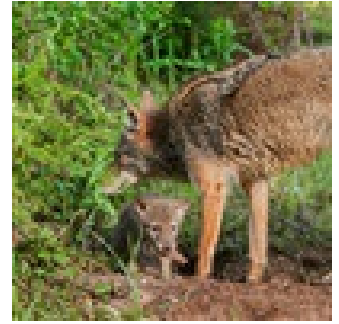
If you suspect that an online quiz is a phishing scam, tell a friend. Then, report it to the FTC at [ReportFraud.ftc.gov](https://ReportFraud.ftc.gov).





## Waterfowl, Coyotes & Bears Oh My – it must be Spring

Spring will soon be springing, and our urban wildlife encounters will be adapting. As the grass begins showing off its green the ducks and geese will be migrating through or settling in, the coyote kits will be born and beginning to learn to hunt, and on occasion solitary black bears (or mothers with cubs) pass through Ramsey County on their way to preferred foraging areas.



Bears usually avoid humans and will go away when they feel safe. The best way to avoid bear problems is to not attract them in the first place. Remove food sources such as bird feeders, compost piles and garbage cans. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) advises Black Bears that are outside of the metro 694/494 loop are to be left alone and not killed outside of hunting season. DNR will investigate probable nuisance bears that may pose a risk to public safety and will respond accordingly. The Ramsey County Sheriff's Office generally will not respond to mere bear sightings nor if a bear happens to be on your property foraging or hunting prey. We will record your information, so that we can track and relay the bear sighting to the DNR.

More info on bears:

[https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/livingwith\\_wildlife/bears/homes.html](https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/livingwith_wildlife/bears/homes.html)

More info on coyotes:

[https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/livingwith\\_wildlife/coyotes/index.html](https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/livingwith_wildlife/coyotes/index.html)

## Neighborhood Watch is about Neighbors and Deputies working together

Involved neighbors are more likely to have open communication lines with each other, deputies, and the whole community. When neighbors know each other's names, normal patterns, and look out for each other, it is likely that they will report any activity that doesn't fit with regular schedules. Involved neighbors look out for each other.

Information sharing on crime prevention, crime trends, and law enforcement issues is a key element to the Neighborhood Watch program of the Sheriff's Office.

Neighborhood Watch program [information and forms](#) to help your block organization are available on the county [website](#). **Please complete and return the [Block Captain registration form](#)** to ensure the Sheriff's Office has your most current contact information. THANKS!

Online information of activity in your neighborhood – [CommunityCrimeMap.com](http://CommunityCrimeMap.com)



### Mark your calendars for 2023 events:

**Tuesday, April 18** – 6:30pm – Captains Meeting, 1425 Paul Kirkwold Drive, Arden Hills

**Tuesday, August 1** –between 5pm to 9pm dependent upon neighborhood – **Night to Unite**

Details for 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> quarter meetings and distribution of Night to Unite materials are under construction

**Thank you for working for safer neighborhoods!**



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**Remember – when you See Something, Say Something, Call 9-1-1**