

# NHW CHRISTMAS NEWSLETTER

There is no doubt it has been a difficult year for everyone, but a lot of our Neighbourhood Watches came together to look after our vulnerable neighbours. Regular deliveries of supplies and medicines were organised and many socially distanced checks were made to ensure everyone was okay.

Some of the Covid regulations have been lifted for the Christmas period, meaning that many families will come together to celebrate but this also means that some people will be alone or have their plans cancelled. Please make safe contact with any neighbours who are alone this Christmas and show them that people are still looking out for them, which is one of the most important benefits of being part of Neighbourhood Watch.

## CRIMES

Criminals were still active this year, but there was a switch in their targets and methods. Garden sheds, outbuildings and garages became popular targets as many people were now working from home.

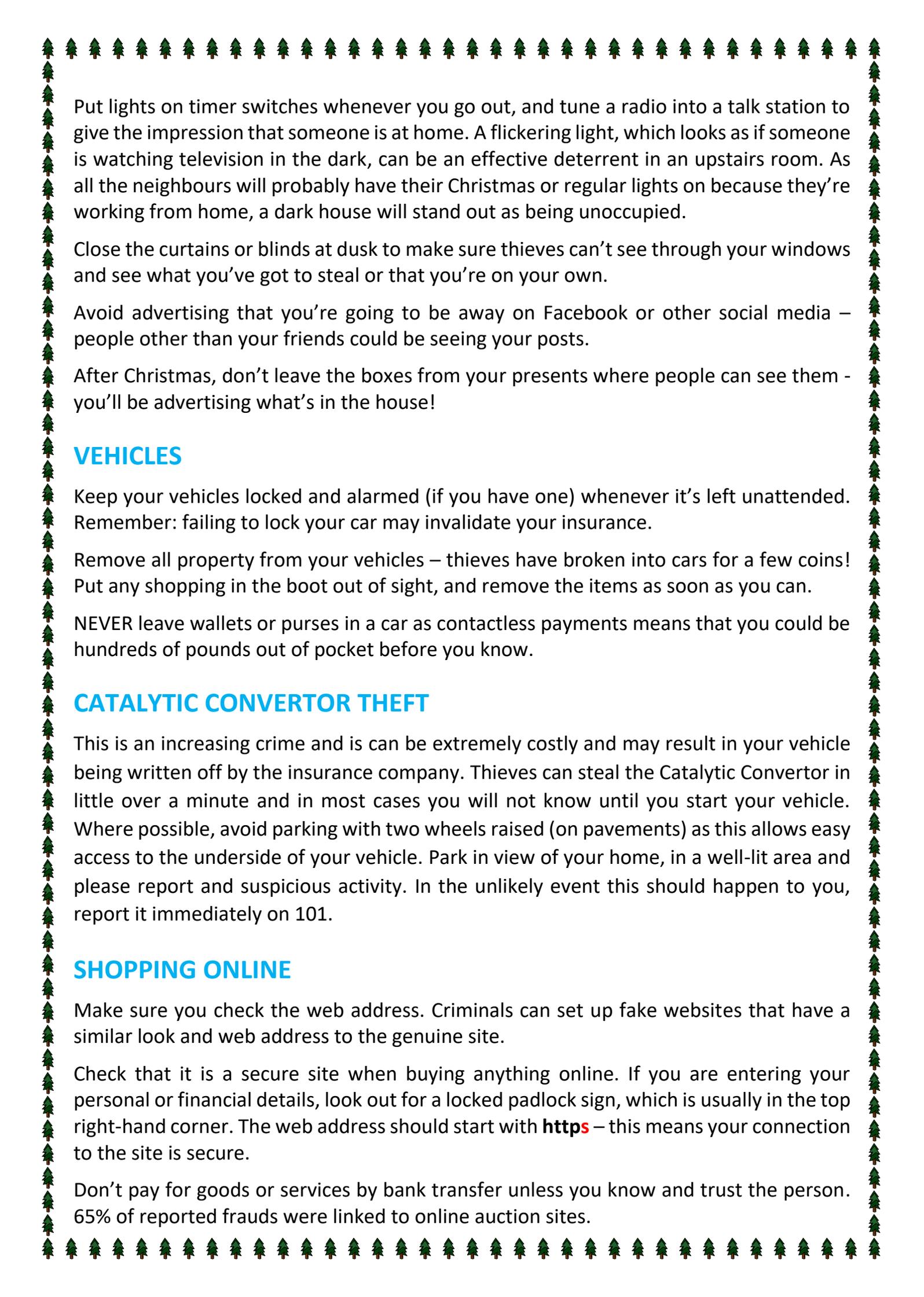
With the increase in cycling as a way of keeping fit and the reduction in traffic making it a popular way of getting around, it meant that bicycles were the target of many outbuilding burglaries. Buy a decent lock to Sold Secure standard and register your bike on <https://www.bikeregister.com/>

## TELEPHONE FRAUD

We have seen a large increase in the amount of reported telephone scams over recent months, with calls allegedly from Amazon, TV Licencing, HMRC, DPD, Royal Mail and even fraudsters claiming to be Police Officers. The majority of these are cold calls will advise you that either a payment has been unsuccessful and you need to take action (such as Press 1 on your keypad) or they require you to take action in a different way, like go to your bank, or follow a link on a webpage. Our advice is to do none of these and simply hang up the phone. If you still have doubts, call the organisation they claim to represent using a different number that you know and trust to confirm it is a genuine call. NEVER use a number given to you by the caller. Wait at least five minutes for the phone line to clear or use a mobile phone if possible. If you have doubts contact Action Fraud: <https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/contact-us>

## HOME SAFETY

Keep all unattended doors and windows locked at all times – we have had numerous reports of criminals trying vehicle doors and also house doors. Remove any keys and keep them out of sight and reach, but ensure everyone knows where they are in case of emergency. Close internal doors at night to help prevent the spread of fire and smoke.



Put lights on timer switches whenever you go out, and tune a radio into a talk station to give the impression that someone is at home. A flickering light, which looks as if someone is watching television in the dark, can be an effective deterrent in an upstairs room. As all the neighbours will probably have their Christmas or regular lights on because they're working from home, a dark house will stand out as being unoccupied.

Close the curtains or blinds at dusk to make sure thieves can't see through your windows and see what you've got to steal or that you're on your own.

Avoid advertising that you're going to be away on Facebook or other social media – people other than your friends could be seeing your posts.

After Christmas, don't leave the boxes from your presents where people can see them - you'll be advertising what's in the house!

## VEHICLES

Keep your vehicles locked and alarmed (if you have one) whenever it's left unattended. Remember: failing to lock your car may invalidate your insurance.

Remove all property from your vehicles – thieves have broken into cars for a few coins! Put any shopping in the boot out of sight, and remove the items as soon as you can.

NEVER leave wallets or purses in a car as contactless payments means that you could be hundreds of pounds out of pocket before you know.

## CATALYTIC CONVERTOR THEFT

This is an increasing crime and is can be extremely costly and may result in your vehicle being written off by the insurance company. Thieves can steal the Catalytic Convertor in little over a minute and in most cases you will not know until you start your vehicle. Where possible, avoid parking with two wheels raised (on pavements) as this allows easy access to the underside of your vehicle. Park in view of your home, in a well-lit area and please report and suspicious activity. In the unlikely event this should happen to you, report it immediately on 101.

## SHOPPING ONLINE

Make sure you check the web address. Criminals can set up fake websites that have a similar look and web address to the genuine site.

Check that it is a secure site when buying anything online. If you are entering your personal or financial details, look out for a locked padlock sign, which is usually in the top right-hand corner. The web address should start with **https** – this means your connection to the site is secure.

Don't pay for goods or services by bank transfer unless you know and trust the person. 65% of reported frauds were linked to online auction sites.

Many couriers now ring the doorbell and don't wait until someone answers, meaning your parcel could be out in the open if you didn't hear the doorbell. Arrange to have to parcel left in a secure location if possible, or ask for it to be delivered to someone who will be home.

## GOING OUT

At time of writing it is unknown what restrictions may be in place, but it would be good practice to stay the correct distance away from people, wear a mask when required and wash your hands often.

It's likely to be busy when you're shopping or going out at Christmas, so watch out for pickpockets. Keep any wallets and purses in a zipped up pocket if possible.

Get some cash before you go out, so you don't need to use a cash machine. If you have to get more money, never keep your PIN number in your purse or wallet, and always make sure no-one can see your number.

## THANK YOU

On behalf of your Neighbourhood Police Team and your NHW Administrators, we want to thank you all for your continued support of Neighbourhood Watch, which continues to grow as people come together to reduce the level and fear of crime.

This year the three dedicated Administrators have sent 5,768 messages to our coordinators and you in turn have sent these on to your members across the Avon and Somerset policing area, keeping them informed and helping them to stay safe.

We send you all our best wishes for the Season, and hope you stay well and safe.

Kind Regards,

Trevor Wilmot  
Northeast NHW Administrator

Paul Johnson  
Somerset NHW Administrator

David Holmes  
Bristol NHW Administrator

