



Officer Matt Tortorella, San Diego Police Department CITY

It has come to the attention of our department more and more of late that peddlers, interviewers and solicitors are canvassing our city streets. In tough economic times, the water is warm and conditions are ripe for fraud, elder abuse, financial crimes and just downright falsely represented charities that are tantamount to outright theft. Let's dive into the waters headfirst and lay some terms out for understanding.

As the City's Municipal Code defines it; "A solicitor is a person who goes from house to house, business to business, without an appointment, or to one house, street, sidewalk, alley, plaza, park, public place, by foot or vehicle, who sells or solicits for value of goods. They make work for themselves or for a business." San Diego Municipal Code 33.1401 And most importantly, "All persons working as interviewers, solicitors, peddlers or vendors of merchandise, services, magazines, etc. are required to obtain a Police Registration Card. When operating, the card MUST be displayed on the front of their person, and they MUST exhibit the card to any peace officer upon demand. (*San Diego Municipal Code 33.1402*)

This card is white in color, has a photo, tracking number, and identifying information along with official City of San Diego background /seal. Our SDPD Permits and Licensing Unit grants these passes after a background check, fingerprinting and collection of fees. If a person at your door is displaying a City ID, you can considerably better in dealing with them should you choose to. But do not forget, it is a legal requirement.

It is unlawful for ANY person to ring the doorbell of a residence, rap or knock on any door, or create any sound in a manner calculated to attract attention for the purpose of engaging in activity as a solicitor or interviewer if the occupants have posted on the premises "No solicitors," "No soliciting," "No solicitors or peddlers," or any similar language clearly denying invitation and entry to solicitors. *San Diego Municipal Code 33.1410*

No person under 14 years old will be issued a Registration Card, and persons under 18 must have a work permit from their school. And a seldom known fact is that California Civil Code Section 1689 et. Seq., requires solicitors to provide a contract for buyers allowing a "3-day cooling-off period" for sales of \$25 or more.

NO PERSON shall operate as a solicitor between the hours 8 p.m. and 9 a.m., except by appointment. San Diego Municipal Code 33.1410 California Penal Code, section 532(d), makes it a misdemeanor to make false representation in solicitation of charitable contributions.

So what does this all mean? In short, it is highly unlikely for a person who knocks on your door to be legitimately operating and in compliance with our Municipal Code and the State Laws. We as a Police Department feel strongly about identifying and contacting these persons, as a percentage of these are merely posing as solicitors for purposes of criminal enterprise. What better way to gauge home security, vacant status, yard security and valuables located within a home then knocking on

the doors and looking in the windows, ostensibly to sell items or services? These solicitors are the smoke before the fire. Burglary series in our areas of San Diego have been canceled by arresting solicitor crews. Our recommended response is as follows:

When home and someone knocks on the door without appointment, we recommend you acknowledge the knock and let them know you are home. People have been surprised when a burglar using soliciting as a front thinks no one is home and enters the home after getting no answer on a knock. Ask the purpose of the visit and observe through a peephole. If it is a solicitor, ask to see the "Issued City License/ ID card of the person." Do not open the door if it isn't present or even if it is and you feel uncomfortable. Inform the person of your intention to call the police if they don't have a license to solicit and then place a call to our non-emergency number of 858-484-3154.

We would like you to report these persons as potential "casers" or suspects. Very rarely are good services and reputable companies using door-to-door solicitation as legitimate means of commerce. More than likely it will be someone using a ruse or scam to separate you from your money. All the stories of "helping get to a college trip" or "for poor children / women/ etc..." are by and large fictitious and should in no way be encouraged with your hard earned money. We regularly encounter vans full of out of state persons with criminal history staying in our motels / hotels for just this purpose.

Don't be victims; call the police to report this activity. If the person refuses to leave or tries the door handle, call 911. Help us keep the streets clear of scams, fraud and burglary. Your vigilance is greatly appreciated. As you know now, a litany of laws exist for just this reason, and for good reason. The direct correlation between unauthorized soliciting and crime are well documented. Thanks for asking the question on the minds of so many!

May 28 in Crime & Safety to 376 neighborhoods