

Preventing Porch Piracy



As your District Attorney, I'm committed to increasing communication and accessibility between the DA's Office and you, the community. One way I have been doing that is through this monthly column, where I provide consumer tips on public safety matters.

The 2019 first quarter earnings of the behemoth retailer Amazon were released some weeks ago and showed sales up 17% from the last quarter. This enormous growth spurt reflects the changing shopping habits of a general public that is choosing to shop online more and more. As online shopping makes an unprecedented gain in the overall consumer economy, a new problem has begun to emerge: porch piracy.

Porch piracy is when a package is stolen after being delivered to a private residence. According to a study, about 26 million Americans had packages stolen in 2017. To add salt to the wound, the average value of the stolen packages was found to be of about \$140. With the recent growth in online sales unlikely to slow down, it is more important than ever to know how to stop and prevent porch piracy.

Here are some steps you can take to help prevent package theft:

- Schedule your package to be delivered at a time in which you are home
- If this is not possible, try to schedule the delivery to your office
- Use a lockbox service such as Amazon Locker, UPS Access Point, or rent out a PO Box with USPS
- Use tracking services to know the time and date of your package arrival. Tracking services are typically provided free of charge by UPS, FedEx, and the USPS
- Install a camera to monitor your front door. Wireless front door cameras include the Ring Doorbell, Google Nest, and the Skybell Trim.
- Leave detailed instructions for the delivery person to follow. For example, you might include leaving your package under a porch couch pillow to have it hidden from view.
- Insuring every one of your packages guarantees that even in the case that your package is stolen, you can obtain a refund or identical replacement.
- Finally, if all else fails, simply buy your product the old-fashioned way from a brick and mortar store.

Following the tips above will give you the best chance of receiving your package safely and on time. However, there are times that, despite our best precautions, things still go wrong. So what do you do when your package *is* stolen?

Here are the steps you should take if your package is missing.

- First, check around the outside of your house to make sure the delivery person didn't set your package in a hidden spot.
- Check with your neighbors to see if your package wasn't accidentally delivered to them.
- Check for any attempted delivery notices from the delivery service. These are usually found near the front of your residence.
- If your package remains missing, contact the shipping carrier to confirm delivery and to report the stolen packages
- Contact the online seller to report the stolen package as well. Often times, online sellers like Amazon or Walmart can resend your purchased item at no cost if stolen.
- Some homeowner's insurance covers stolen packages but will usually only do so if they are valued above \$500.
- Finally, submit a theft report by calling your local police department through their non-emergency phone line.

As more and more people turn to online shopping, the opportunities to have your deliveries stolen grow as well. However, by following the tips above you can feel secure that your package will be delivered to your front door and not to some petty thief.

The San Diego Police Department non-emergency number is 619-531-2000. You can also use the *Citizens' Online Police Reporting System* [here](#) as well.

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[District Attorney Summer Stephan](#) has dedicated more than 30 years to serving justice and victims of crime as prosecutor. She is a national leader in fighting sex crimes and human trafficking and in creating smart and fair criminal justice solutions and restorative justice practices that treat the underlying causes of addiction and mental illness and that keep young people from being incarcerated.

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