



# *Columbia Heights Police Department*

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*Scott Nadeau, Chief of Police*



## **Avoid Being a Craigslist Victim**

As times change, so do criminal tactics. A previous crime prevention article addressed common electronic scams that have been used in the area. Craigslist is oftentimes the go-to tool used by criminals today. The anonymity of Craigslist users gives the criminal the confidence to strike their victims in a variety of ways.

We have identified common methods that Craigslist criminals are using to prey on victims. In a more common scenario, the victim is selling an item on Craigslist. The victim receives a bogus check in a greater amount than the item they are selling. The buyer fabricates a story explaining why the check is greater than the asking price, and requests the difference is sent back to them. The criminal buyer hits the jackpot when he receives cash payment for the difference before the victim realizes the check is bad. You can protect yourself from this commonly used scam by requiring payment by means other than personal check. A red flag should go up if the check is greater than what you are asking for your item. Don't hesitate to ask your bank or authorities for help if you suspect something foul.

Craigslist transactions can be an uneasy situation for some people. The area has had incidents where theft from person occurs during a transaction. In one incident, the buyer paid the seller, only to realize minutes later that the box which was supposed to contain a television actually contained worthless material. In a recent scenario, a cell phone was stolen during a public Craigslist transaction. To ensure your safety, consider conducting transactions with strangers during the day and in a police station lobby.