



City of Parma, Ohio

LAW DEPARTMENT



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LAW DIRECTOR ADVISORY PACKAGE THEFT

Residents in the City of Parma and across the nation have reported being the victim of package theft. In recent years, there have been an increasing number of incidents where a package bought through an online retail service is delivered to the buyer's front doorstep by a delivery service such as Amazon, FedEx, UPS, or the U.S. Postal Service. The package will sit in plain sight from the street or sidewalk until the buyer brings the package inside. This presents package thieves with a large window of opportunity to steal packages. Some package thieves operate without a plan and seize opportunities as they are presented- whether walking or driving by a house. When they see the packages unattended, they take the opportunity to steal. Other thieves take a more strategic approach to their thefts. For example, a package thief may trail behind an Amazon truck, picking up packages that the driver has just left.

Recent studies show that package theft has affected more than 40% of American shoppers at some point. In the last 12 months, more than 5 in 10 shoppers reported having more than one package stolen, for an average loss of \$106 per household. Using those statistics as applied to the census of total U.S. households, these averages suggest that porch piracy has cost U.S. consumers over \$7.4 billion in the last year (144 million victims x \$106/package). Despite these thefts, nearly three-quarters of Americans reported that they have done nothing to protect deliveries from future thefts.

Parma Law Director Tim Dobeck urges Parma residents to be aware of these package thieves, and to report suspicious behavior. Below are a few steps you can utilize to protect yourself and your packages from package thieves, and steps to take if you find yourself the victim of package theft:

→ Take precautions

- **Install an outdoor security camera** - A highly visible security camera clearly pointing towards the front doorstep makes it clear that your property is being monitored and allows you to review footage in the event of a theft.
- **Use a doorbell camera** - While not as obvious as a security camera, a doorbell camera on your property still shows that your property is being monitored and will serve as a deterrent for would-be package thieves. If a criminal knows he is being watched and recorded, there is a good chance he will not carry out the plan. As a bonus, the installation of a camera may qualify you for a homeowners insurance discount.
- **Keep your front porch clear and visible** - This is an anti-burglary tip often shared by police officers. Thieves target houses where they can get to and from your doorstep undetected. If they are more likely to be seen, they are more likely to choose another target.
- **Install home security window and yard signs** - Signs advertising your home security system could be enough to scare off a thief.
- **Schedule for in-person delivery** - Inform your courier service that you require a signature for delivery, or make sure your mail is delivered to an address where somebody is always present.
- **Install a lockbox on your front porch** - A lockbox is essentially a large, sturdy container that delivery drivers place packages within and then lock so criminals cannot steal the package.
- **Communicate with neighbors** - Preventing package theft could be as easy as speaking with your neighbors. If a package thief has targeted one or more houses on a street, the entire neighborhood could be on the lookout for suspicious activity. Further, neighbors that are home during the day could hold your packages for you, safekeeping it until you are home to retrieve it.
- **The Amazon Key** - Amazon now has its own preventative security service which allows delivery drivers to open your garage door with a wireless key. However, one would need a smart garage door opener or smart lock.
- **Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office Camera Registry** – Any individual with a security camera on their property may voluntarily register it with the Prosecutor's Office. In doing so, when video footage in a specific area would be useful, the local police department may view the footage and request a copy if it is helpful to their investigation. You can register your camera at: <http://prosecutor.cuyahogacounty.us/en-US/Surveillance-Camera-Mapping-Project.aspx> A printed copy of the form is attached to this Advisory.

→ **What to do if you are a victim:**

- **Track the package** - If you suspect your package was stolen, the first thing to do is check your purchase confirmation email for tracking information. Usually, the confirmation email will include a tracking number that you can use to track the item's shipping status. If your item is listed as having been delivered, see the subsequent steps below.
- **Check if your neighbors saw the package or held onto it for you** - Before reaching out to the police or the delivery company, ensure that none of your neighbors are holding on to your package for you.
- **If you have a video doorbell or security camera, check the footage** - Look for moments of activity near your front doorstep.
- **Contact the seller or retailer** - If it is confirmed that your package was delivered and no neighbors took possession in your absence, contact the seller or retailer that sold the item. Different retailers have different policies regarding stolen items, but often, buyers are entitled to a refund or replacement.
- **File a claim with the shipping company** - If the retailer will not take responsibility, shipping companies like UPS, FedEx, USPS, and DHL all provide an online claims process to report a missing item, as well as the ability to contact them by phone.
- **Use the purchase protection features on your credit** - Many credit card companies offer purchase protection that will reimburse buyers for stolen items- just be sure that the item was purchased entirely with that credit card and the card issuer is notified within a specified time frame. Your credit card provider's website should have information pertaining to coverage and how to file a claim.
- **Claim high-value items with your homeowner's insurance** - As a last resort, one could utilize their homeowner's or renters' insurance policies, as most cover stolen packages. Unfortunately, this is only helpful if the purchase is worth more than your deductible.
- **File a police report** - by filing a police report, you can help others in your community combat package theft.

→ **Report:**

- If you believe you have been a victim of package theft, contact the Parma Police Department at 440.885.1234 to file a report on the suspected theft.



Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office
Crime Strategies Unit
Security Camera

Date: _____ Business Residence

Address: _____

Name of Establishment/Residence: _____

Contact Person: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email: _____

Audio Recording at this location? Yes No

Coverage of Public Access Areas? Sidewalks, street, etc. Yes No

Camera view Front Back Side Interior Street

Number of Cameras at Location: Interior _____ Exterior _____

Identify the Camera: Pan Tilt zoom Fixed **Brand:** _____

Camera Specification High Def Infrared
 Standard Low Light **Other:** _____

Recorder DVR Analog Cloud/Web **Brand:** _____

Format: (MPG, _____ Retention Policy _____
MP4, AVI, etc.)

Please return all forms to the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office, Crime Strategies Unit, at
cepocameramap@prosecutor.cuyahogacounty.us