

# WHAT'S *New*

IN THE METROPOLITAN POLICE DEPARTMENT

*A weekly update for residents, visitors, and workers in the District of Columbia*



*Friday, August 16, 2013*

## ASK DC APP LAUNCHED TO HELP VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT AND DATING VIOLENCE

On August 14, 2013, the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice Paul Quander and the Mayor's Office of Victim Services (OVS) joined community-service providers, leading experts in sexual-assault prevention, and law-enforcement officials from throughout the DC area to launch a new, District-wide initiative to address sexual assault and dating violence through the use of technology.

The Assault. Services. Knowledge. DC, or ASK DC, initiative features mobile application, website and training components all aimed at providing resources and raising awareness for victims of sexual assault and dating violence. For the first time, the app compiles 33 assault-response resources from all service providers throughout the District in one, easily accessible tool. It provides quick access to immediate medical help and law enforcement, 24-hour support hotlines and online chats, and District-specific community resources. The ASK DC initiative also encompasses a series of training sessions that will provide military personnel, law-enforcement officials, Capitol Hill staffers, deaf and hard-of-hearing residents and other District communities with bystander intervention strategies and sexual-assault-response protocols. The initiative also includes specialized resources for victims of sexual assault and dating violence in the military personnel, LGBTQ, deaf and hard of hearing, and multilingual communities. The resources are available in English, Spanish, French, Amharic, American Sign Language, and 22 different Asian languages.

ASK DC was modeled after U ASK DC, which launched in September 2012 and provides access to all the services available to victims of sexual assault and dating violence available on the District's college and university campuses. U ASK DC was created in response to alarming numbers of occurrences of campus sexual assault coupled with the severe underreporting of those incidents. ASK DC takes this model a step further, extending access to the entire District. The same partnership that created U ASK DC (OVS and leading men's violence-prevention organization Men Can Stop Rape) created ASK DC as a response to demand for an app of the same nature that was accessible and applicable to all District residents and visitors.

ASK DC is also a model that states and cities can replicate to increase reporting of rape and sexual assault; reduce the number of incidents; and raise awareness about, and use of, vital community resources. According to the 2008 National Crime Victimization Survey, every 2 minutes, someone in the United States is sexually assaulted. In addition, 40 percent of young men and women surveyed in the 2013 Teens and Young Adults on Dating Violence and Sexual Assault study reported that they would not know what to do if they witnessed dating abuse or sexual assault. ASK DC, with its innovative structure, presents a unique opportunity to address these statistics.

» The ASK DC app is available for free download in the iTunes App Store, Google Play Store or BlackBerry App World and is compatible with BlackBerry, iOS and Android OS devices.

» For more information, visit ASK DC online at: <http://www.askdc.org>

» Learn more about Men Can Stop Rape at: <http://www.mencanstoprape.org>

» For more information on the Office of Victim Services, visit: <http://ovs.dc.gov>



## FOLLOWING RASH OF THEFTS ON METRO, MPD REMINDS READERS TO PROTECT PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES

The Metro Transit Police recently announced an increase in snatch thefts of electronic devices, such as iPhones, iPads, Kindles and Android phones, and urged riders to be vigilant while on the transit system. Metro Police Chief Ron Pavlik said there were 40 snatches of electronic devices on the Metro system in the two-week period ending August 7, 2013. While Metro police are taking steps in response to the recent increase, Chief Pavlik noted that Metro passengers have an important role to play. "These are crimes of opportunity, and they are preventable," he said. "The best advice is to keep your device out of sight, but if you do choose to use it, maintain constant awareness of what's happening around you." Riders are urged to not use electronic devices near train doors, where most snatches occur. Many thieves time the snatch as the doors are closing, running through the closing doors onto the platform and leaving the victim aboard the train. More recently MTPD has cautioned against using electronic devices on escalators in response to several incidents where criminals have run up the escalator and snatched devices as they pass their victims.

The MPD wants to remind you that small electronic devices can be snatched anywhere. Owners are encouraged to do what they can to reduce their risk of becoming a victim of a robbery on or off public transportation. The MPD offers the following tips:

- **Protect Your Information.** Make sure your phone is password protected before you walk out the door. That way, if your device is lost or stolen, no one can run up your phone bill or access your online accounts.
- **Don't Walk and Text.** Texting while walking is dangerous, especially in crosswalks and other areas with heavy pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Not only that, when you're texting, you're not paying attention to your surroundings, which make you an easy target for criminals.
- **Pocket the Phone.** Consider putting your smartphone away for a bit. If you are wearing headphones, don't turn up the volume so high that you cannot hear outside noises. Don't forget that ubiquitous white cord may indicate to would-be thieves that you're carrying a certain brand of smart phone.
- **Be Alert.** Always be aware of your surroundings. Wherever you are—on the street, in an office building or shopping mall, driving, waiting for a bus or subway—stay alert and tuned in to your surroundings.

If your smart phone is lost or stolen, you may now contact the carrier and ask to have that device remotely disabled. If a smart phone is rendered inactive in such a manner, it's often considered to be as useful as a "brick." These "bricked" phones are of little use to thieves because they can't be reactivated after being sold on the black market. The MPD is encouraging victims of smart phone thefts to call their carriers and to "brick it" in an effort to deter smart phone theft. By bricking your phone, you will permanently disable your device and help us eliminate the black market for stolen smart phones. We can reduce robberies by eliminating the reason criminals steal smart phones in the first place!

- » The MPD offers a variety of safety tips, including a complete brochure on robbery prevention. Read the tips online or download brochures at: <http://mpdc.dc.gov/safety>
- » Get more information on "bricking" your phone at: <http://brickit.dc.gov>
- » The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) offers information on how to safeguard yourself against wireless device theft at: <http://www.fcc.gov/guides/stolen-and-lost-wireless-devices>
- » If your smart phone is lost or stolen, contact your carrier. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has a contact list of service providers at: <http://www.fcc.gov/stolen-phones-contact-numbers>



### NEWS & NOTES

#### Also Noteworthy

#### March on Washington Set for 8/24.

Join Mayor Vincent C. Gray in a rally for DC Statehood and Self-Determination march to the Lincoln Memorial in recognition of the 50th

Anniversary March on Washington at 8:30 am on August 24, 2013 at the DC War Memorial. Learn more at <http://marchondc50.dc.gov/>.

#### Information, ideas, or comments about this service?

Send an e-mail to **KAYLIN CASTELLI**, Manager of Internet Communications, at [kaylin.castelli@dc.gov](mailto:kaylin.castelli@dc.gov)

#### Would you like *What's New in the MPD* emailed to you each week?

Register with DC.Gov at <http://dc.gov/DC/Subscribe/Email+Alerts>

LEARN MORE AT  
**mpdc.dc.gov**