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NEWS RELEASE

METROPOLITAN POLICE DEPARTMENT

Service, Integrity, Leadership, and Fair Treatment to All

July 27, 2009

Thief Posing as Utility Worker, Targeting the Elderly
Legitimate Utility Workers Carry Company ID, Wear Uniforms

Since Wednesday, July 22nd, the Metropolitan Police Department has investigated five incidents involving a man who poses as a Laclede Gas worker to gain entry into residences. Once inside, the victim either demands money or steals from the victims. With one exception, each of the incidents has occurred in South St. Louis on “state streets”—that is, streets that take their names from a state.

The suspect is targeting the elderly. The victims are:

- An 80 year old White female
- An 81 year old White male
- An 82 year old White female
- A 90 year old White female
- A 92 year old White female

The suspect is described as:

- Black male with a light to medium complexion
- 5 feet 8 inches tall to 5 feet 10 inches tall
- Medium build, approximately 200 pounds
- 35-50 years old
- Clean-shaven
- On Wednesday, July 22nd, wearing khaki pants and a checkered tan & white shirt
- On Thursday, July 26th, wearing brown shorts and a black baseball cap

The incidents occurred:

- Wednesday, July 22nd, the suspect knocked on a door in the 3900 block of Minnesota and told the resident that he was there from Laclede Gas to check on a gas leak. After being allowed inside, he went to the basement. When he came back upstairs he told the resident that he was owed \$100 but the resident did not have any money. Becoming fearful, the resident pulled out cash from an envelope to give to the victim, but the suspect forcibly took the envelope then left the residence.

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- Sunday, July 26th, the suspect entered an unlocked door in the 3600 block of Alberta and removed cash from a wallet found inside the home. As the suspect left the home, he awoke a sleeping resident of the home and stated that he worked for Laclede Gas and was there to check the meter. The suspect then left.
- Sunday, July 26th, the suspect knocked on a rear door of a residence in the 4600 block of Alaska and told the victim that he was an employee of Laclede Gas and wanted to be allowed inside. The victim refused but the suspect then forced the door open, pushed the victim aside and walked in. The suspect took the victim's purse and ran.
- Sunday, July 26th, the suspect knocked on a door in the 4000 block of Pennsylvania and told the victim that he was a Laclede Gas employee. The victim did not believe the suspect and would not let him in but the suspect forced his way inside and went to the basement. When he returned he told the victim that he had to turn off the gas and that the victim owed him \$75. The victim refused to pay and the suspect began shoving the victim demanding payment. The victim gave the suspect a small amount of cash and the suspect left the residence.
- Sunday, July 26th, the suspect appeared at a screen door in the 4100 block of East Iowa, saying he was with Laclede Gas and that the victim needed to let him inside due to a problem with the meter. The suspect then threatened to turn the gas off if the victim didn't show him the meter. When the victim walked to the back of the residence where the suspect he was, the suspect grabbed the victim and threw the victim on the bed demanding money. The victim retrieved cash and gave it to the victim who walked out.

Laclede Gas provides the following tips to ensure the legitimacy of a service call:

- Laclede Gas service technicians are in uniform, carry proper company photo identification cards and drive vehicles marked with the gas company logo. Laclede Gas technicians do not solicit service reconnection calls door-to-door nor do they accept onsite payment for service calls.
- Put your own safety first – if you have not scheduled or are not expecting a service-related appointment, question anyone requesting access to your home—regardless of the utility, company or service being represented.
- No one should be allowed into a home until they can show proper identification or confirmation has been received from the company that the service call is legitimate. If need be, call the company and ask about the situation prior to giving access.

In addition, the Metropolitan Police Department always advises that if you ever feel your safety is being compromised, call 911 immediately.

Anyone with any information about these incidents or the suspect is encouraged to contact Crimestoppers at 1-866-371-TIPS. Callers can remain anonymous.

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