

ALERT

I WAS RECENTLY ADVISED OF A CONCERN IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD AND ASKED HOW TO RESPOND. THE CONCERN WAS THAT OF SOLICITORS, USUALLY SELLING MAGAZINE SUBSCRIPTIONS OR SOMETHING SIMILAR. THE INDIVIDUALS CAN BE VERY PERSISTENT, EVEN RUDE, AND SOME HAVE FELT UNCOMFORTABLE BECAUSE THEY DON'T KNOW WHO THESE PEOPLE ARE.

I DON'T WANT TO GENERALIZE TOO MUCH, BUT IT HAS BEEN MY EXPERIENCE THAT THESE SOLICITORS ARE OFTEN PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN RELEASED FROM HALFWAY HOUSES (FOR SOME REASON IN FLORIDA) AND HAVE LONG CRIMINAL HISTORIES. THEY TRAVEL FROM PLACE TO PLACE, PACK 10-15 IN A MOTEL, AND A VAN DRIVES THEM AROUND TO NEIGHBORHOODS TO HARD SELL PEOPLE. MOST OF THE TIME THEY MAKE THEIR SALES BY VIRTUE OF PESTERING THE HOMEOWNER WHO BUYS JUST TO GET RID OF THEM (AND OFTEN NEVER GETS THE PRODUCT). ANOTHER SELLING TACTIC IS EVOKING SYMPATHY IN THE BUYER. WE HAVE FOUND SEVERAL OF THEM IN POSSESSION OF THOSE SELF STICK ON "NO SOLICITING" SIGNS THE FOLKS PUT NEAR THEIR FRONT DOORS. I HAVE HEARD OF A CASE A FEW YEARS BACK IN ALVIN WHERE A SOLICITOR FORCED HIS WAY INTO A HOME DURING THE DAYTIME AND SEXUALLY ASSAULTED A FEMALE. I HAVE WORKED ONE CASE AT AN APARTMENT COMPLEX HERE WHERE THE MALE SELLER TRIED TO FORCE HIS WAY INTO AN APARTMENT OCCUPIED BY A TEEN AGED GIRL.

MY ADVICE IS TO CALL THE POLICE WITH A GOOD DESCRIPTION OF THE PERSON AND DIRECTION OF TRAVEL. IF YOU HAVE A STORM DOOR, SPEAK TO THEM THROUGH THAT IF POSSIBLE. WE DO ARREST IN PEARLAND FOR THIS OFFENSE OF SOLICITING WITHOUT A PERMIT. MANY DON'T BUT WE DO. CITATIONS ARE FRUITLESS BECAUSE THE MERRY BAND OF SOLICITORS WILL BE OUT OF STATE BY THE TIME IT GOES TO COURT. I HAVE SEEN SOME IN OUR JAIL WHO HAVE CRIMINAL HISTORIES IN UP TO 15 STATES FROM COAST TO COAST. LOTS OF THEFTS, BURGLARIES, SOMETIMES ASSAULTS. THESE ARE NOT STARVING COLLEGE STUDENTS AS ADVERTISED.

AS I SAID, I DON'T WANT TO GENERALIZE, BUT I CAN TELL YOU THAT I HAVE NEVER HAD A SOLICITOR AT MY DOOR BECAUSE I HAVE A POLICE CAR PARKED IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE. THAT SHOULD TELL YOU SOMETHING. BY THE WAY, WE'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT LEGITIMATE GROUPS SUCH AS MISSIONARIES AND GIRL SCOUTS. THEIR ACTIVITY IS QUITE LEGAL AND IS PERMITTED BY CITY HALL. IT IS THE MAGAZINE, VACUUM, DEGREASER SELLERS (FOR EX.) SOLICITING A PRODUCT FOR PROFIT WITHOUT A VALID PERMIT THAT WE ARE DEALING WITH. IT IS LIKE A PERSONAL VISIT FROM A TELEMARKETER. IF YOU ARE NOT SURE ABOUT THE SOLICITOR, JUST CALL ANYWAY. IF NO ACTION IS WARRANTED THE OFFICERS WILL NOT TAKE ANY. BUT IF IT IS WE DO TAKE ACTION. THE NO SOLICITING SIGNS POSTED AT THE ENTRANCES TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD WILL HELP PROSECUTE THE CASES.