



YOUR Community, YOUR Neighbors
OUR RESPONSIBILITY
get involved today

Columbia Neighborhood Watch

March 2026

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New Police Liaison

We have been assigned a new police Liaison. His name is Sargeant Kyle Thornsberry. His email is: kyle.thornsberry@como.gov

Officer Jason McClintic has accepted another assignment and we will miss his dedication to our neighborhood Watch Program.

With Spring comes an increase in crime.

Spring is a time of renewal, and that includes renewing our commitment to community safety. Let's continue to work together to make our neighborhood a safe and welcoming place for everyone. Remember:

"See Something, Say Something!"

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COLUMBIA NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH is tax exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.



Highlights from Officer Thornsberry

THEFT PREVENTION TIPS RELAYED FROM THE COLUMBIA POLICE DEPARTMENT'S CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIVE DIVISION:

#1 thing to protect yourself is to lock your car doors and close your garage doors.

Groups of people (mostly juveniles) walk around at night and check car doors and enter open garage doors. If the doors are locked, they usually keep moving until they find easier targets.

Scammers often trick their victims into sending gift cards, itunes cards, or Google play cards. They claim the funds can be used to pay for missed jury duty, taxes, bail, debt collections, or towards fees to pay for computer virus protection. Scammers also contact their victims via email, text, or facebook and pretend to be a friend and ask for gift cards.

The scammers express the need for quick action. They tell their victims not to tell anyone what they are doing, and that they will be arrested if they hang up or don't cooperate.

If a friend has asked you to buy them gift cards, please talk to that friend in person or over the phone before you purchase any.

Government agencies will not ask for gift cards as payment for fines or bail.

If you think someone is trying to steal your money with one of these scams, please call 311 to have an officer contact you for more potential report details.

A flyer is going around by a group that calls itself
COMO Neighborhood Watch
we want to clarify that we are not part of this group!!

Columbia Neighborhood Watch has no connection of any kind to any Federal Law Enforcement Agency including ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) and CBP (Customs and Border Protection).

We are a civilian nonprofit organization and do not participate in any law enforcement activities including immigration enforcement.

What CNW does do

Our mission is simple and local:

- Help neighbors organize and communicate with one another
- Provide training on how to recognize and report suspicious activity and public safety issues.
- Support crime prevention efforts in partnership with the Columbia Police Department.
- Strengthen public safety, in conjunction with our partners, through awareness and education

Neighborhood Watch is about **neighbors looking out for neighbors**.

Why confusion sometimes happens

In Columbia, the words “CoMo,” “Neighborhood Watch,” and “ICE” occasionally appear in unrelated news stories or social media posts. This can create the impression that these topics are connected. They are not.

Our commitment to all residents

CNW welcomes every resident who wants to help build a safer, more connected community.

We do not ask about immigration status, and absolutely do not share personal information.

If you ever have questions about CNW or how to get involved, we can be contacted at:
col.neighwatch@gmail.com

Tax Fraud Prevention Measures

1. **IRS Priorities and Initiatives**

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has several initiatives aimed at detecting and preventing tax fraud. The IRS Criminal Investigation (IRS-CI) unit focuses on investigating various types of fraudulent activities, including money laundering, misuse of COVID-relief funds, and phony cryptocurrency investment schemes. The newly established Office of Fraud Enforcement (OFE) works to improve fraud detection and develop new enforcement streams.

2. **Protecting Yourself from Tax Scams**

To protect yourself from tax scams, it's essential to be aware of common tactics used by fraudsters. Scammers often impersonate IRS agents or tax preparers, claiming that you owe more taxes or are entitled to a larger refund. They may ask for personal information or threaten arrest if you don't pay immediately. Always verify the legitimacy of any communication claiming to be from the IRS and avoid sharing sensitive information with unknown sources.

3. **IRS Recommendations**

The IRS provides a list of the "Dirty Dozen" tax scams that are most common each year. These scams tend to peak during tax-filing season and include phishing schemes, fake charities, and identity theft. The IRS urges taxpayers to use reputable tax professionals, avoid signing blank tax forms, and report any suspicious activity to law enforcement.

4. **Resources for Taxpayers**

For more information on tax fraud prevention, you can visit the following resources:

Detecting Fraud and Protecting Taxpayers-(<https://www.irs.gov/about-irs/irs-priorities-detecting-fraud-and-protecting-taxpayers>)

- How to Protect Yourself From 2025's Most Dangerous Tax Scams (<https://www.investopedia.com/how-to-spot-and-avoid-the-latest-tax-scams-8771703>)

- IRS Criminal Investigation Targets Tax Fraudsters - (<https://www.irs.gov/compliance/criminal-investigation/irs-criminal-investigation-targets-tax-fraudsters-urges-taxpayers-to-protect-themselves-this-tax-season>)

By staying informed and taking proactive steps, you can help protect yourself from falling victim to tax fraud. If you suspect any fraudulent activity, report it to the appropriate authorities to help combat this ongoing issue.

Understanding Spring Weather Risks

Mid-Missouri experiences some of the most volatile spring weather in the country. Residents should be prepared for:

- **Severe thunderstorms** capable of producing damaging winds and large hail
- **Tornadoes**, most common from March through June
- **Flash flooding** after heavy or repeated rainfall

Extended power outages caused by lightning or downed lines

Knowing what to expect helps everyone respond quickly and confidently.

Stay Alert With Reliable Weather Information

Timely information saves lives. Encourage every household to use multiple alert sources:

- **Wireless Emergency Alerts** on smartphones
- **NOAA Weather Radio**, especially useful during power outages
- **Local news and emergency management updates**

City and county alert systems for Columbia and Boone County

Neighbors who are new to the area, older adults, or those without smartphones may need help setting up alerts – a small gesture that can make a big impact.

Create a Family Safety Plan

A simple, written plan ensures everyone knows what to do when severe weather hits.

- **Identify your shelter location:** lowest level, interior room, away from windows
- **Establish communication methods** if family members are separated
- **Assign responsibilities** (grabbing pets, emergency kits, medications)

List neighbors or relatives to check on after storms

Review and update your plan each spring, especially if your household has changed.

Build or Refresh Your Emergency Kit

A well-stocked kit helps you stay safe and comfortable during outages or sheltering. Include:

- Flashlights and extra batteries
- First-aid supplies
- Bottled water and shelf-stable food
- Portable phone chargers
- Weather radio
- Medications and pet supplies
- Copies of important documents

Sturdy shoes and gloves for post-storm cleanup

Store your kit in an easy-to-reach location so it's ready at a moment's notice.

Prepare Your Home and Property

A few outdoor tasks can reduce storm damage and protect your neighbors as well.

- Trim tree limbs away from roofs and power lines
- Secure patio furniture, grills, and lawn equipment
- Clear gutters and downspouts to prevent flooding
- Test sump pumps before heavy rain arrives

Check that house numbers are visible for emergency responders

These small steps help minimize hazards during high winds and heavy rain.

After the Storm: Safety First

Once severe weather passes:

- **Check on neighbors**, especially older adults or those with mobility challenges
- **Report downed power lines** and blocked roads to authorities
- **Avoid walking or driving through floodwater**
- **Document any damage** for insurance purposes

Use generators safely – outdoors only, far from windows and doors

A calm, coordinated response helps the whole neighborhood recover more quickly.

Neighborhood Watch: Stronger Together

Spring weather is unpredictable, but our response doesn't have to be. Neighborhood Watch members play a vital role by:

- Sharing alerts and safety information
- Helping neighbors secure property before storms
- Checking in after severe weather

Reporting hazards promptly

Preparedness is a community effort, and every resident contributes to a safer, more resilient neighborhood.

Show your support for our Police. To raise awareness we are selling “Back the Blue” signs for your yard or window at a cost of \$20 which is considered a charitable donation to a 502(c)3 organization.



The sign will be delivered and can be purchased on our website or click below.

Control click the button below

[PURCHASE SIGN](#)

CPD offers tips to help prevent robberies

Robberies in Columbia aren't common, especially when compared to larger cities, but they do happen. In 2025 there were more than 40 reports of robberies and purse snatchings in the city.

Here are 15 tips to keep yourself and your possessions safe while you're out and about:

1. Be aware of your surroundings. Walk with a purpose, head up, and look around. Stay in lighted areas at night. Robbers don't want to be seen.
2. Stay with the crowd – there is safety in numbers.
3. Women should carry their wallet in their pocket, not their purse.
4. Don't leave a purse on a counter or in a shopping cart unattended.
5. Be cautious when wearing “flashy” jewelry.
6. Be conscious of people just “hanging around” anywhere, especially near public rest rooms, building entrances and garages.
7. Notify the police of strangers who are hanging around your home, apartment or place of business for no apparent reason.
8. Don't carry large sums of cash whenever possible.
9. Vary your routine – don't do the same thing at exactly the same time every day.
10. Be aware of people around you when you are using your ATM card. When possible, use an ATM that is located inside a business, such as a grocery store.
11. Lock your car doors when your vehicle is unattended even if you will only be out of it for a minute. When you return to your vehicle, look at the rear seats to make sure no one is hiding.
12. While driving, keep your vehicle doors locked.
13. If you are walking and a vehicle is following you, reverse directions or cross the street.
14. If someone acts suspiciously, looks at you closely or follows you, head for a populated and well-lit area, and call the police.
15. Carry a whistle or other noise-making device. Use it to call attention to yourself if threatened.



