

Solicitors / Strangers at Your Door

When someone knocks at your door, acknowledge you are home. Talk through the door without opening it. If you don't answer, and it happens to be a criminal type, they may attempt to break into your home.

You are not obligated to open the door to anyone. Identification should always be verified before opening the door. A wide angle door viewer is an absolute must if visibility of callers is not possible. Service representatives should have appointments and not just "show up" at your door.

Do not rely on a door chain for security. Partially opening a door equipped with a door chain is a practice that must be discouraged. The door is not secured. A door chain cannot withstand physical force.

1. First, talk to the person through the door. You don't know the person, so don't open the door!
2. Ask what they need. If it is a car problem, offer to call their road service for them. If it is an accident, call 9-1-1 for them. The idea is to keep them outside and you make the call for them. The police are very helpful. There is a chance that it is legitimate and a chance that they may be scamming you. So protect yourself first.
3. Ask them to stand by while you place the call. If the person(s) stays, it is a good chance that they are legitimate, however, if they leave quickly, it is probably a con.

Suggestion: Take a good look at their face, clothing, any distinguishing features, direction of travel, another person, a vehicle, etc. This may be useful if you call the police for help.

If the person leaves quickly, it is considered very suspicious and it would be best to call the police department immediately to report it. Call 9-1-1 or 650-329-2413.



If it is a solicitor, they **must have a permit displaying the City of Palo Alto seal** issued by our police department in their possession. There are two types:

- **For profit:** solicitor selling a product or service. They must comply with the 9am-6pm rule and any signs that are posted that deny their solicitation (NO SOLICITORS signs);
- **Nonprofit organization:** they can go door-to-door for contributions at any time. If you have a NO SOLICITORS sign and they won't leave, call the police. This is trespassing.

Look at the permit through your window or wide angle door viewer. Make sure the dates are current. Possession of a permit does not mean that we endorse them. The police department does not solicit for funds or support.

Sample Solicitor Permit

Example is typed, most permits are hand written and are always signed by the person issuing the permit (where the words "NOT VALID" appear in the example)

				PERMIT/LICENSE	
City of Palo Alto POLICE DEPARTMENT 329-2406				NO. 19690	
NATURE OF BUSINESS		EFFECTIVE DATE		NON TRANSFERABLE	
SOLICITOR - MASTER PERMIT-SAMPLE BUSINESS		06-03-06		FEE \$ 157.00	
HOURS RESTRICTED TO 9:00am to 6:00 pm only		EXPIRATION DATE		PENALTY \$ NONE	
		09-03-06		TOTAL FEE \$ 157.00	
BELOW NAMED HAVING PAID AMOUNT SHOWN HEREON AND HAVING COMPLIED WITH ALL ORDINANCES OF CITY OF PALO ALTO IS HEREBY AUTHORIZED TO CONDUCT BUSINESS DESCRIBED HEREON UNTIL DATE SHOWN ABOVE.					
A SAMPLE BUSINESS - SAMPLE ONLY				NOT VALID	
ADDRESS 1234 ANY ST					
CITY & STATE PALO ALTO, CA. 94301 (650) 555-1212					
AUTHORIZED PERSONS MUST CARRY THIS PERMIT/LICENSE AND DISPLAY IT UPON REQUEST.				AUTHORIZED SIGNATURE	

When it comes to making the call to the police department, when in doubt, just call. It is better to pass the information on. In the big picture, it may be the very piece of information we need to stop an individual and it may possibly result in an arrest.

For additional information, please contact the Palo Alto Police at:

Phone: 650-329-2413

Email: pd@cityofpaloalto.org

<http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/depts/pol/news/details.asp?NewsID=259&TargetID=95>