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# BREMERTON POLICE DEPARTMENT



## Chief Strachan's Weekly Update

We started last week with an example of the various challenges faced by police officers, and the diplomacy required to deal with some of them. Saturday, Officers Alan McComas, Jason Butler and Chris Faidley were dispatched to the hospital on a report of a woman who refused to allow her eight month old baby to be treated for a serious medical condition. When hospital staff informed the mother that the baby needed to be transported to another hospital for critical care, the mother became very upset and came up with several excuses why that could not happen. Officer McComas went to work trying to deal with each excuse, which included not bringing enough diapers, she needed extra clothes, etc. She was assured that the hospital would supply all of these, or we would transport her wherever she needed to go to get these items. She then started saying that hospital staff was being "rude". Eventually, Officer McComas was able to determine that the main reason for her reticence was that she had not brought any cigarettes, so Officer Butler quickly ran to a nearby convenience store and bought her a pack of smokes. She was pleased and allowed the baby to be transported to Tacoma. It is jarring to think that a baby's health was dependent on an \$8 pack of cigarettes, but the outcome was good. We also notified Child Protective Services to check in with this family. The people skills required of police officers are always changing, and always critical.

The next day, officers dealt with a man who was making repeated calls to 911 to report that his apartment was bugged with "listening devices". Officers Joe Corey and Cory Ditmer talked to him and used their Crisis Intervention Training to help solve the problem and keep him safe. While they were speaking to him, he raced into the bathroom and flushed the toilet. He explained that he was flushing the listening devices. Later that same day, officers were called back out to the apartment when he apparently "found" more listening devices and had placed them in a backpack and decided to "nuke" them in the microwave. Now he had graduated to behavior that was creating a fire hazard for the whole apartment building, so he was taken into protective custody and evaluated at the hospital.

These kinds of calls involving people hearing "voices" and acting in erratic ways are very common, and remember that all too often these voice and behaviors result in attacking officers or residents, and too often result in officers being placed in dangerous situations that require force to be used. Our chronically underfunded mental health system puts these folks back into the community far too often, and officers are required to try to deal with the effects, again and again. As you hear about high-profile incidents where the focus is on the officers and the force used, we should always be asking why the officers were placed in that situation in the first place...

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Later in the week, Officer Trevor Donnelly was on patrol when he saw the occupants of a car slink down low, almost to the floorboards, in the seats. Not to get too technical, but that is what we call an "indicator of suspicious behavior". The officer decided to pull over and have a chat. He asked the woman for an ID, and in accordance with the current authority-defying zeitgeist, she responded by telling him that "her lawyer says she doesn't have to show an ID". Officer Donnelly took a closer look at her and recognized her as a wanted subject. He assured her that it was okay for her to not show ID, and called her by name. According to the officer, when he called her out by name, the look on her face was priceless. It was as if she'd just discovered she was going to jail or something...which she did.

Finally, here is a case that shows the great way our different teams work together to catch a dangerous criminal. Monday, a guy lights a fire near a dumpster at a West Bremerton gas station (this would be arson). He then runs into the store to tell the clerk about the fire. While the clerk calls 911 and tries to douse the fire, the man steals several cartons of those coveted and highly desired cigarettes. The clerk caught on to this diabolical pretense, and tried to stop the man, but he pushed past the clerk (this would be a robbery). The bad guy dropped most of the cartons, but ran away still clutching a few.

The clerk put out the fire and the Fire Dept. came out and checked it. Officers and K-9 Officer Esco tracked the bad guy to a nearby grocery store, but did not locate anyone. We looked at the surveillance video and developed a suspect. A few days later, our Special Operations Group along with our Bike Team obtained a search warrant for a residence in East Bremerton and arrested several people, including our suspect. So, for a carton or two of these coveted cigarettes this guy committed a felony arson and a felony robbery. He went to jail and hopefully will reconsider before trying that again. Great teamwork by our officers!

### ***Work Hard - Have Fun - Stay Safe***

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