

Published April 10th, 2013

The Story of the Strange Little Pink Flyer and Cyber Security

By Sophie Braccini



Brian Cook Photo Andy Scheck

Residents in the Rheem Valley Manor neighborhood had a perplexing experience last month. On March 18 several of them found bright pink flyers stuck to their front doors or garages offering free electronic and metal recycling by a company the flyer identified only as "A.P." Pick-up was promised by 7 a.m. March 26, but when many items that were left out were not picked up and the alleged business proved hard to reach at the phone number provided on the flyer, concerned citizens brought the situation to the attention of Moraga police.

According to Detective Will Davis, much of the information printed on the flyer is not legitimate - the license number is fictitious, the phone number is not associated with any business and there is no business named A.P.

Davis also said he did not find any "recent alerts in our area regarding scams purporting to pick up metal for recycling."

Lamorinda Weekly called the number on the flyer and spoke with a man who identified himself as Enrique Torres. He said he picks up material and resells it to others for recycling.

By March 27 new flyers were distributed in Moraga offering a recycling pick-up date of April 1. Davis continued to investigate and contacted the district attorney's office. "The legality of this type of business has to be checked," said the detective. "The D.A.'s office is going to follow this case and will look into it."

Davis recommended that residents be very cautious about recycling electronic equipment. "One way ID thieves get their victims' info is from old computer hard drives," he said.

Reporting Cyber Fraud

Special Agent Brian Cook of the F.B.I. spoke to the Moraga Chamber of Commerce March 29 on the topic of cyber fraud. Cook gave a chilling presentation about the extent of cyber attacks both on governments and private entities. He did not have a lot of information on how to protect one's private information online-it seems that almost anything can be cracked and accessed-but he asked that the F.B.I. be contacted when cyber fraud happens; the phone number, available 24/7, is (415) 553-7400.

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