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Do you use classified advertising websites such as Craigslist or buy, sell or trade merchandise via social media sites? If so, listen up.

The Burleson Police Department just designated the parking lot at the new police department as an exchange zone. Residents are encouraged to use 1161 S.W. Wilshire Blvd. (Elk at Wilshire) to exchange merchandise that you intend to sell or purchase.

Why did the police take this step? The exchange zone creates a safer way to meet a stranger instead of them coming to your home or meeting at an unsecured location. Using the zone can cut down on your chances of being robbed.

Parents/guardians can also meet at 1161 S.W. Wilshire Blvd. to exchange their children during custody or visitation times. For years, parents were permitted to use the parking lot at the old police station for that purpose.

Please keep these safety tips in mind if you are selling or buying merchandise from a stranger.

- Meet in a well-lit public place (consider meeting up at a police station or public place).
- Arrive early. If anything about the location or the people does not feel or seem right, listen to that gut feeling and leave.
- Don't enter another person's vehicle and don't let anyone enter your vehicle.
- Always be aware of your surroundings and don't leave your billfold, credit cards, or personal items in plain view.
- Don't get distracted if multiple people show up.
- Bring someone with you to the exchange, and remain vigilant.

- If you happen to become the victim of a robbery, remain calm and don't resist the suspect's efforts to take your property.
- Memorize the suspect's description (race, sex, age, clothing, tattoos, glasses, and facial hair).
- Get the make, model and color, as well as the license plate number, of the suspect's vehicle. Tell the police which way the suspect left the area and what road he/she took.
- If you can safely do so, take a picture or video of the vehicle while it's leaving, then call 911 immediately and calmly pass this information on so that the dispatcher can pass it on to responding officers.

The Burlison Police Department is dedicated to keeping our citizens safe. If you have any questions, and it is not an emergency, please call 817-426-9903.