



**"Gotcha"**  
**Criminal Justice &  
Public Safety  
County of Prince George**



**June 2011  
VACo Achievement Awards**

Recognizing the Best in County Government Programs!



## 2011 Achievement Awards

ATTN: 2011 Achievement Awards Program  
Virginia Association of Counties  
1207 East Main Street, Suite 300  
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### Call for Entries



## 2011 VACo Achievement Awards

Deadline: June 1, 2011

### Application Form

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. Deadline: June 1, 2011.

#### Program Information

Locality Prince George County  
Program Title "Gotcha" vehicle theft awareness program  
Program Category 4. Criminal Justice & Public Safety  
Population Category (3) 30,001 to 50,000

#### Contact Information

Name Sergeant Chris Douglas  
Title Community Policing Unit Supervisor  
Department Police Department  
Complete Mailing Address 6600 Courthouse Road, Prince George, VA 23875  
Telephone # (804) 733-2773 Fax # (804) 733-2658  
E-mail cdouglas@princegeorgeva.org

#### Signature of county administrator or chief administrative officer

Name Percy C. Ashcraft  
Title County Administrator  
Signature\*

\*Entries without this signature will not be accepted.

## **“Gotcha” Program Overview**

**Program places card into dash of unlocked vehicles alerting them to the fact that they have left themselves vulnerable to theft.**

**Program created by Community Policing unit and used by all Police staff.**

**Program has already reduced number of vehicle theft cases in local apartment complexes. Due to success of program, it has recently been expanded to alert local businesses to crime vulnerabilities.**

**PRINCE GEORGE COUNTY  
POLICE DEPARTMENT  
“GOTCHA” PROGRAM**

**Problem**

In April of 2010, the Prince George County Police Department started receiving an alarmingly high number of Larcenies from Vehicles in one particular apartment complex. In the time period April 1, 2010 to March 31, 2011, officers wrote reports for 27 vehicles broken into with items stolen, plus one additional report where entry was gained but no items taken. The period April 1, 2009 to March 31, 2010 only recorded six (6) vehicles broken into with items taken. Most larcenies are crimes of opportunity, they happen because the opportunity is there for it to happen. Vehicles get broken into for several reasons: the vehicle is left unlocked or with the windows left down, the vehicle is parked in a dark corner of a parking lot, or valuable items are left in plain view of any person walking past. Some people will take items and place them in the glove box, center console or under the front seat. They will then leave the power cord plugged into the outlet giving thieves the idea that items of value are still in the vehicle.

**Actions Taken**

In June of 2010, the Community Services Unit started passing out fliers and holding tenant meetings to get the word out not to leave items in vehicles. This showed limited results. Crime prevention tips were given to tenants along with the information of how crimes occur. In July of 2010, the Community Services Unit placed a digital display board in the apartment complex with a message to secure vehicles and leave items out of view. This also showed very limited results. County staff were determined to look for a way to educate residents and reduce thefts.

**Solution**

In September 2010, the Community Services Unit came up with the “Gotcha” idea after seeing a similar program that was used on a college campus. This program entailed leaving a card in the

vehicle any officer found to be unlocked. This card stated to the vehicle owner that, "If I had been an actual thief, you would have been a statistic! Please do not give a thief the opportunity to rip you off." Our officers placed well over 50 of these "Gotcha" cards in vehicle of this particular apartment complex. Since these cards have been placed out, there have only been six (6) reports of vehicle theft. The Community Services Unit has received 12 compliments from these citizens with only one complaint.

### **Program Implementation**

These cards were designed by a member of the Community Services Unit and immediately approved by the Chief of Police and staff. Cards were printed by a local printing company and paid for out of the Department's budget. These cards were passed out at a monthly Department Supervisor's meeting with training on how to fill them out. Officers were instructed to enter their information in the computer system in case any of the vehicle owners later became victims. These "Gotcha" cards were unveiled to the public by way of a County Press Release, on the website, and through two (2) local news articles. The Community Service Unit has since received inquiries from a Law Enforcement Agency in California and another in Michigan looking to establish a similar program. Due to the success of the "Gotcha" program, the County is expanding the program to include placement of these cards at both business and residential locations when officers find an unsecured door.

# Gotcha!



If I had been an actual thief, you would have been a statistic! Please do not give a thief the opportunity to rip you off.

**Date/Time:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Security/Safety "violation":**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Additional comments:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Officer:** \_\_\_\_\_

Prince George County Police Department 733-2773





# PRINCE GEORGE COUNTY

## Prince George Police "Gotcha"!

**Posted Date:** 9/21/2010



**Prince George County Police  
(804) 722-8657**

**Contact Person: Sergeant C. Douglas**

### For Immediate Release

**September 21, 2010**

#### **(Prince George, VA) – Prince George Police "Gotcha"!**

The Prince George County Community Policing Unit is passing out "their" cards for violations. These are not your ordinary business cards though. These are designed to let you know that you could have been a crime victim.

If an officer spots a safety or security concern they will issue a notice that will tell you what the concern, "violation", was and ways to correct it, along with the date and time it was found. If you are vulnerable these notices may be found on vehicles that have been left running - but unattended; homes or businesses found with an open or unsecured door; vehicles left unattended with expensive items in plain sight; or any number of other safety or security concerns.

Most crimes occur because the opportunity is there for it to occur. Oftentimes, as people go about their daily schedule, they tend to forget the minor details in which they could stave off crime. The goal of these cards is to make people aware of their role and responsibility in preventing crime. If you eliminate that opportunity, you can greatly reduce your chance of becoming a victim.

The "Gotcha" program reflects Prince George County Police Department's commitment to protect and serve the community. Together we can make a difference!