



Contact: Bill Crabtree
Telephone: (919) 554-6196
Email: bcrabtree@wakeforestnc.gov
Web: www.wakeforestnc.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

POLICE INVESTIGATE SUSPICIOUS INCIDENT AT HOLDING PARK

WAKE FOREST, NC – August 27, 2008 – On Sunday, August 24 Wake Forest police questioned a man at Holding Park, 133 West Owen Avenue, after reports that he had been asking parents at the park if he could push their children on the swings.

A subsequent investigation revealed that the man is a registered sex offender in Tennessee following a conviction in 1987 for taking indecent liberties with a minor.

Since the man was convicted and served his sentence prior to the creation of the North Carolina Sex Offender and Public Protection Registry in 1996, he is not required by North Carolina law to register as a sex offender in this state, nor is he required to follow the restrictions of a registered sex offender. He remains registered as a sex offender in the State of Tennessee, however, because their laws differ from North Carolina's laws.

Wake Forest police say Sunday's incident should serve as a reminder for parents, grandparents, and caregivers that when they're not around, even for a moment, and a stranger approaches their child, it is important for the child to know what to do.

Experts say parents should approach the subject of safety in a non-threatening way. Children should be taught to be cautious and recognize potentially harmful situations. The key is to help them feel empowered and to encourage them to develop and trust their intuition. Open communication between parents and children is critical. Parents should encourage their children to talk to them when something is bothering them.

According to former FBI agent Clint Van Zandt, who lectures on child and family safety issues, here are 10 safety tips every parent should know:

1. **The key is communication:** It is important to talk openly with your children about all safety issues, including what to do in a potential abduction situation.
2. **Knowledge is power:** Talk to your children about the rules pertaining to strangers. Let them know a stranger or predator looks just like any other person and will use

any number of ways to lure a child. Remember, the vast number of children who are victimized know their assailants.

3. **Know the common predator lures:** pretending to look for a lost pet; asking the child for directions; giving or promising candy and/or money if the child will go to their car; and, threatening to hurt family members if the child does not comply. When your child hears this, know that it's time to run!
4. **Never label clothing, backpacks, or other personal items such as jewelry with your child's name.** A predator will use this information to try to gain your child's trust. (Place the label inside the object and/or use the child's initials or some design for easy identification.)
5. **Give your children instructions on what to do if they get separated from you in a mall, supermarket or any other public place.** Tell them to first find a mother with children or any woman and let them know they are lost. Also they can go to a check-out counter, information desk, or approach a police officer.
6. **Make sure that your child knows his or her full name, address, and phone number and the phone number for the place where you work or how to contact you.** They also need to know how to dial 911, make collect calls, and dial the operator on a pay phone.
7. **Know where your children are at all times, and keep a list of their friend's names, addresses and phone numbers and remember to update your children's records including a photo every 6-12 months.** Be aware of overnight parties unless you personally know and trust the teens and adults living and having access to that home.
8. **Trust your own instincts**— if you don't feel good about a person, keep your child away from that person.
9. **Practice, practice, practice:** Going over this information once with your children is not enough! You need to continue to rehearse and “role play” to make the learning permanent so your child can react properly when under pressure.
10. **If your child is missing, try not to panic.** First, check everywhere in the house, then check with your neighbors and your child's friends. If you still cannot locate them, call the police immediately. Remember, there is no waiting period required to report a missing child to the police.

Van Zandt also offers the following Safety Tips for Children:

1. Do not get into any car unless your parents personally tell you to. Also, stay away from anyone who follows you on foot or in a car. You do not need to (and should not) go near a car to talk to the people inside.

2. Adults and other people who need help should not be asking a child for help; they should be asking other adults. Adults should not be asking you for directions or to look for a “lost puppy” or telling you that your mother or father is in trouble and that they will take you to them.
3. Quickly get away from anyone who tries to take you somewhere. Yell or scream, “This person is not my father (or mother).” Remember to “yell, bite, kick, and run.”
4. You should use the “buddy system” and never go places alone. Always ask your parents' permission to leave the yard/play area or to go over to someone's home and especially always ask permission before you go into someone's home.
5. Never, never hitchhike! Do not try to get a ride with people unless your parents have told you it's okay to do so. If you are approached at a bus stop by someone who wants to take you away, run instead to a neighbor's house.
6. People should not ask you to keep a special secret. If they do, tell your parents or teacher. Also, tell anyone who wants to take your picture, “No,” and quickly tell your parents or teacher.
7. No one should touch you on the parts of the body covered by your bathing suit, nor should you touch anyone else in those areas. Your body is special and private.
8. You can be assertive and you have the right to say “No” to someone, including adults and even relatives or friends who try to take you somewhere against your will, touch you, or who makes you feel uncomfortable in any way.
9. Many parents use a special code word that only the child knows to convey a message should someone other than a parent ask a child to accompany them anywhere. If the special code word is ever compromised, simply agree to a new word with your child.
10. Have a special yell. It is low, loud and long. It tells the person trying to hurt the child, “I know what to do! I'm not an easy victim!” It tells everyone within the sound of the child's voice, “I need help!” It gets the child going, it breaks the “spell.” A child should not panic and freeze, thereby becoming immobile in an emergency. When you yell, you take a deep breath, getting oxygen and energy to your brain and muscles. One's own yell can give a person courage— and can get feet moving when someone need to run away!

Source: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/16659486/>

These and other personal, family and child safety information as well as free access to all known state and local sexual predator data lists can be found at www.livesecure.org.

###

For more information on the [Town of Wake Forest](#), contact [Bill Crabtree](#), Public Information Officer, at (919) 554-6196.