

Offices in
Suffolk and
Virginia Beach, Virginia
Tel: 757-399-7506
Fax: 757-397-1267
Web: www.oasthook.com



MEMBER



Special needs require special lawyers.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- If Your Wallet Disappears
- Ask Allie
- Announcement
- Distribution of This Newsletter

Editor
Sandra L. Smith,
Certified Elder Law Attorney

IF YOUR WALLET DISAPPEARS

A recent article in the *AARP Bulletin* highlighted the effects of the loss or theft of one's wallet or purse. During the holiday season, it is even more important to keep these valuable items secured; they are easy targets in the hustle and bustle at the local mall.

You can protect yourself by making a photocopy of everything you keep in your wallet. This includes your driver's license and other forms of identification, credit cards, insurance cards, and video and library cards. You may want to keep copies of these documents both at home and in the hotel room safe when traveling. The backs of your credit cards contain valuable information such as security codes and contact information in case your card is lost or stolen. If you are an American Express card member, you may want to consider using the American Express Credit Card Registry for your card information.

If your wallet does become lost or stolen, there are several important steps to take:

- Call your credit card companies immediately. Do not request to "cancel" your account; instead ask for an "account number change." Cancelling your account can affect your credit score and cause problems if you have an outstanding balance. Let the credit card company know that you do not want anything on your credit card report showing "cancelled by consumer." This advice comes from Linda Foley of the Identity Theft Resource Center.
- Change your passwords so your accounts cannot be opened by someone else. Passwords should include letters, numbers, and symbols, and should not be common words such as your mother's maiden name or the names of children or pets.

- You should file a report with the police not only in the area in which your wallet disappeared, but also in your hometown. Keep copies of the reports for later use.
- Contact the three major credit reporting agencies and ask them to put a fraud alert on your account. You can contact them at the following numbers and websites: Experian, 888-397-3742 (www.experian.com); TransUnion, 800-680-7289 (www.transunion.com); Equifax, 800-525-6285 (www.equifax.com). If you have a fraud alert on your account, creditors are required to verify your identity before issuing new credit in your name.
- Contact the Department of Motor Vehicles and ask it to put a flag on your license file. This will make it more difficult for a thief to have a new driver's license issued in your name. You will likely have to replace your license in person, and in the process have to prove your identity by means of a birth certificate, passport or Social Security card. (By the way, you should not carry your Social Security card in your wallet.)
- Notify your bank that your wallet is missing. You will need a new ATM or debit card and perhaps even a new checking account.
- Approximately two weeks after your wallet disappears, check your credit history. You can visit AnnualCreditReport.com or call 877-322-8228 to obtain your free reports. You can look under the section labelled "Inquiries" to see if any new credit applications have been made in your name. The two-week time period would be enough time for thieves to apply for credit, but not enough time for cards to be issued. You should recheck your credit report two to three months after the first review.

The attorneys at Oast & Hook can assist clients with their estate, financial, insurance, life care, long-term care, veterans' benefits and special needs planning issues.

Ask Allie

O&H: Allie, we've heard that veterinarians have ten things they want pet families to know. Please tell us the first five.

Allie: Sure! A recent article in *HealthyPet* magazine described several things that veterinarians want families to know, but that they may not tell you. First, talk with your vet and let your vet know your expectations for your pet's care. Your vet needs to know the level of care that you expect for your pet, as well as your own emotional and financial limitations, so your vet can provide the best care. Next, write things down, so that when you visit with your vet, you have a list of problems, concerns and questions, and so you don't forget to mention anything. Third, make that call to your vet and ask if you have concerns about your pet's behavior. It may be nothing to worry about, or it may indicate a serious problem. Next, be proactive, and don't wait too long to consult your vet about an issue involving your

pet. Several problems in pets may double in seriousness every 24 hours. Fast action and early treatment can make all the difference by saving your pet from suffering and help ensure a better outcome. Fifth, ask your vet questions if you don't understand what your vet is telling you. You can request handouts and other reference materials so you can learn more about what is happening with your pet. You can also ask for a referral to a specialist if you don't think you are getting satisfactory results. I'll cover the other five things your vet wants you to know in next week's issue. Time to see if there are some holiday decorations that I want to play with today. See you next week!

Announcement

Oast & Hook attorney Brian Boys will speak on the topic of estate planning from noon to 1:00 p.m., Tuesday, January 11th at Fourth Baptist Church located at 726 South Street, Portsmouth, Virginia 23704. For more information on this church, please visit www.fourthbaptistchurch.com. For more information on this presentation, please phone Jennie Dell at 757-399-7506.

Distribution of This Newsletter

Oast & Hook encourages you to share this newsletter with anyone who is interested in issues pertaining to the elderly, the disabled and their advocates. The information in this newsletter may be copied and distributed, without charge and without permission, but with appropriate citation to Oast & Hook, P.C. If you are interested in a free subscription to the *Oast & Hook News*, then please e-mail us at mail@oasthook.com, telephone us at 757-399-7506, or fax us at 757-397-1267.

Please visit us on the world wide web at:

www.oasthook.com

Our website contains information about Oast & Hook and an archive of our newsletters and other estate planning, estate administration, and elder law articles in searchable form at.

Copyright © 2010 by Oast & Hook, P.C.

This newsletter is not intended as a substitute for legal counsel. While every precaution has been taken to make this newsletter accurate, we assume no responsibility for errors, omissions, or damages resulting from the use of the information in this newsletter.

This newsletter is produced to be sent electronically. If we currently fax you a copy of the Oast & Hook News but you prefer to receive it by e-mail, then please contact us at: mail@oasthook.com.

If you would like to be removed from our Oast & Hook News distribution list, please e-mail us at mail@oasthook.com, telephone us at 757-399-7506, or fax us at 757-397-1267.