

Who's AT THE Door?

By Anne Spaulding

Dealing with Solicitors

Springtime may mean more strangers at our doors asking us to purchase products or contribute to causes.



What should you do if a solicitor rings your doorbell?

1. The most important thing to remember is: **Never open the door to someone you do not know.** All communication with a solicitor or any other stranger at your door should be **through** the door. Once you open the door to someone you don't know, you are putting yourself and your loved ones at risk. If you have a solid wood door and no window nearby, consider installing a peephole.



2. Make sure you have a **No Solicitors** sticker near or on the door, which can be obtained by joining The Woodlands Watch. A **No Solicitors** sticker puts solicitors on notice that you do not want their business. If they ignore the sticker, point to it (from inside the house) and walk away. If you do not have a way to see the solicitor from inside your home, speak through the door and tell them to leave.

3. If the solicitor refuses to leave, state (from inside your house) "Leave my property now. If you do not, I will call the police." Although soliciting is not illegal, trespassing is. If you tell someone to leave your property and he or she does not, they are trespassing.

4. If the solicitor continues to harass you, call the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office at 936-442-7797 or the Harris County Precinct 4 Constables Office at 281-376-3472. Report that there is a trespasser on your property who refuses to leave despite your request that he or she do so.

5. Don't worry about hurting the solicitor's feelings or making him or her angry. This person is invading your personal property. You have not asked this person to your home.

6. Don't ignore a solicitor as a way of making him or her think that no one is home. The solicitor could be a potential thief who is ringing your doorbell as a way to determine if the house is empty. Although soliciting is not illegal in The Woodlands, by following the steps above, you and your neighbors can deter solicitors from doing business in your neighborhood. However, it is crucial that all your neighbors take an active part in discouraging solicitors. If everyone in your neighborhood refuses to open their doors to strangers, solicitors will eventually realize that your neighborhood is not worth their time. All members of The Woodlands Watch receive a **No Solicitors** sticker, as well as tips on responding to solicitors. If you are not yet a member of The Woodlands Watch, contact The Woodlands Township at 281-210-3800 or neighbor@thewoodlandstowship-tx.gov. If your neighborhood does not have an active Watch program, consider volunteering to be a neighborhood watch coordinator.