

Burglary Prevention Advice

The Windham County Sheriff's Department will be increasing patrols on Augur Hole Road because of the recent burglaries. Lieutenant Mark Anderson, a Deputy Sheriff, offers the following advice:

First and foremost, let's talk prevention:

1) Lock your doors & windows! A lot of people do not. While I'm a firm believer that a lock only keeps honest people out, it provides other benefits as well. Forced entries are harder to conceal and therefore more visible to law enforcement. Additionally, it is an obvious indicator to the home owner that someone has been in there before any evidence is disturbed. The time spent defeating a lock is time spent not stealing your stuff.

2) Be a neighbor! Keep an eye out for your neighbors and their houses. When something seems "doesn't look right," it usually isn't. The question is whether it is unusual or criminal. If it's enough to raise someone's spider sense, it's probably worthy of calling the police.

3) Light it up! While I understand these were day-time burglaries, exterior lighting plays a significant role (I like the phrase, "Evil seeks darkness") in deterrence. It helps a resident and their neighbors be able to see what is going on around them.

4) Secure your valuables: burglars often want to be quick. As such, they're looking for items which they can use to further their needs. A difference of pocket change theft over the family heirlooms can be as simple as where they were left.

5) Consider an alarm: alarms can be in the form of a paid service (such as ADT), an audible alarm that simply alerts anyone who can hear it or (depending on internet access), something that triggers the owner themselves (such as a Dropcam or Honeywell's in-home system). Consumer electronics are relatively low cost in the camera area. A few years ago, I bought four indoor/outdoor cameras and a DVR system for under \$200. There are times when footage is inadmissible, inconclusive or even just downright impossible to use. But cameras often provide a variety of information, to include number of people involved, date/time, duration, in addition to descriptive information for the offender. Sometimes the video footage is so limited, that we can conclude that a person did it and that's it. The key to video is that it needs to be something we can take as evidence. DVD's, CD's, files that can be emailed – these are all excellent examples of media that the Sheriff's Office regularly collects as evidence from the commission of a crime. Occasionally, consumer electronics don't have a way to remove the recording from the device, however, which can create issues.

6) Document before it happens! Knowing the make, model and serial number of your items (where appropriate) is important for any homeowner. When an item is stolen, we need identifying information so we can articulate that it belongs to you - not the person we find your stuff with. It also aids with insurance companies in determining reimbursements on home/renters insurance.

When you find a burglary occurred, call 911 immediately (and preferably from somewhere other than in the home that was broken into). We often find that evidence is lost in burglaries more often because the homeowner went to "see what happened." The responding officer will be able to walk you through the next steps from there.

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