

From the Office of the Sheriff:

During the past few months, we have experienced a rash of burglaries to homes and businesses. The good news is our Criminal Investigation Division has solved most of these crimes. These crimes are classified as Property Crimes, a statistic that we have enjoyed a significant reduction in the past three years, down over 100 Property Crimes from 2002. We would like to keep it that way.

What can you do to help? First and foremost we need to revert back to the days of knowing our neighbors and looking out for each others property while they are away. During my speaking engagements I ask people to name their neighbors 2-3 homes on each side of them and many can not. Only you know what looks out of place in your neighborhood. It is you, the observer that thinks twice when you see a slow moving car drive past your home for now apparent reason. It is this type of information that gets our investigators investigation going in the right direction.

Those that commit these crimes often do their home work. Do you lock your doors every time you leave your home? Do you leave your garage door up when you go to work, exposing that new generator or chain saw to passing motorists? Do you have heavy vegetation growing around your home to conceal someone trying to pry open a window? Do you have a dusk to dawn light or is the bulb burnt out? We live in a great county and Property Crimes are not of tremendous concern but why make it easier for the bad guys. I would ask that each of you walk around your home or business. Do this once during the day and once at night. Think like a bad guy. What window is easily accessed that I will not be noticed? How many sides of your home or business are not lighted. Do you have heavy shadows cast on your home or corners that would mask the burglar from your neighbor or passing vehicle?

The cost to help protect your property is very reasonable. A dusk to dawn light, a light or two on motion sensors, a few better locks, and trimming a few bushes may cost a few bucks. The things you can do to help protect your property for free are getting to know your neighbor and get those in your area to start looking out for one another. Do you have a small safe for those small valuables and special papers? Another area to look into is insurance. My wife has been on me for years to ensure we have proper coverage for valuables that have limits on your home owner's policy. Often "riders" are required for jewelry, firearms, art, and other collectibles. It may be well worth your time to consult with your insurance agent to update your policy to ensure proper coverage in case you become a victim. *Note to self, call insurance agent tomorrow!*

Lastly, make sure you have an inventory of your belongings. I know, nothing will ever happen to you or your property! Well, don't think like that. Catalogue your property, record make and model, serial number, date and place of purchase, and purchase price. Nothing aids our investigations more than the ability to enter your missing items into our computer system. When a guy in Chicago is selling computers out of the back of his van and the Chicago PD runs the serial number, it is a great feeling when it comes back stolen from Dodge County. We can not track or enter these stolen articles unless we have very specific information to enter.

So bottom line, I would love to assure you that you will never be a victim of a property crime but that is very unrealistic. I can assure you that if we work together, property owners, neighbors, and law enforcement alike we can make it tougher on burglars. We can also make it easier to recover your property if it is ever stolen. Thanks for listening tnehls@co.dodge.wi.us