



DODGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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November Sheriff's Column - Keep your property Secure and Safe

Frequently, we hear in the news of people being victimized by thieves and vandals. When a report to law enforcement is made, we are limited in good evidence that is available to us. To victims, it can seem like identifying the perpetrator is hopeless.

Fortunately, there are things that you can do to not only protect yourself, but provide valuable information to law enforcement if you become a victim. The first and most important thing you can do to protect your property is simply to lock it up. I recently had a conversation with someone who told me she has been laughed at by friends when she goes into the gas station because she locks her car doors. I told her that I do the very same thing and encourage this practice for everyone. It only takes a moment for someone to jump in your car and drive away or to steal from inside. The same holds true anywhere your car is. Lock your car when at the store, at your friend's house or even when your car is parked in your own garage.

During interviews I have had with theft suspects, I have asked how they chose their victims. The most common answer was checking for unlocked doors. Unlocked homes and vehicles are much easier targets than locked ones. I think back to an individual who stole three vehicles from three different counties in one day before we took him into custody. He never broke a window to get in or hotwired a car. He stole all three vehicles by simply finding open cars with keys inside and went on a joyride. The moral of the story is always lock your doors no matter where you are or where you live. It is the easiest and most inexpensive way to keep a criminal from stealing your hard-earned possessions.

Another way to help law enforcement is having video or photo surveillance. You may think that is way too expensive for me. Actually, several systems are out there that are relatively inexpensive, starting at about \$150-\$500. You can install a camera system with recording capabilities in your home. Those systems may have just one camera and can go up to 8 or 16 cameras. More and more families are choosing to install camera systems. They are extremely helpful in identifying those who otherwise would go unidentified. They even have doorbells with cameras that connect directly to your smartphone. You can see who is at the door, even if you're not at home. What's better yet is you can take a picture.

What if you don't have that kind of money? Have you ever considered a trail camera that hunters put up in trees? Place one of these in a tree focused on your driveway or the doors to your house. You can get a high-quality camera for under \$100. They are motion activated and take great photos. What a great way to grab the license plates or picture of a thief.

Our deputies work diligently to solve property crimes but simply locking up your valuables and spending a little bit on the front end to capture evidence on camera can go a long way at resolving your case

quickly and bringing thieves to justice. With your help, we can deter criminals or catch them red handed. Together we can enhance the quality of life in Dodge County which will help keep Dodge County a safe and enjoyable place to live, work and visit.