

Nicer weather expected to bring increase in criminal activity

(KNZA)--Brown County Sheriff John Merchant says with nicer weather on the way, coupled with higher costs of fuel and food, criminal activity tends to spike—especially burglaries and thefts.

Merchant said thieves have become more brazen with thefts occurring in broad daylight. He said it is fortunate some residents have security cameras placed so suspects can be identified.

From visits with other agencies - not only in Kansas but across the nation - Merchant said officials agree higher crime rates are either on the way or already plague communities.

“Most of the suspects who are committing these crimes are active users of drugs, alcohol, or both,” Merchant said.

Merchant is asking residents to remain alert and to notify officials if they see strange or suspicious vehicles in the area. He said any information residents can gather in a safe manner is appreciated. Merchant said license plate information is very important as well as make and color of vehicle, direction of travel and number and type of occupants in the vehicle.

“What many of these thieves do is travel the back roads during daylight hours and look for out-of-the-way properties or places that look abandoned or neglected,” Merchant said. “If opportunity presents itself, they will steal items that are convenient, if not, they will then make their way back after dark to steal property that they can readily sell for cash or trade.”

The Sheriff encourages landowners to set up trail cameras to capture pictures in case a theft occurs on their property. He said gates with chains and locks, as well as fences, could help protect property.

“I have several rural property owners who also have dogs guarding their out-of-the-way property and have not had any issues with thefts,” the Sheriff said.

Merchant said officials have also seen an increase in door-to-door activity, especially in rural areas.

“I am not suggesting that all people going door to door are scammers or doing something illegal, however, with the changing times--we cannot be too careful of who we are allowing into our homes,” Merchant said.

The Sheriff said it is always a good idea to request identification from anyone who enters your home whether they are attempting to sell you a product or for any other reason. At the bare minimum, he said a seller should be able to provide a business card representing themselves, a company letter head or something similar.

“It is my opinion that credible vendors should offer this in advance and not pressure anyone into a financial decision,” Merchant noted.

The Sheriff said when vendors go through Brown County, he requests they come to the Sheriff’s Office so he may become familiar with who they are, what vehicles they drive and who will be in the area. He said he also requests contact information to forward to residents have they have complaints about tactics used.

Unless residents know who they are dealing with, Merchant said they should not allow unfamiliar people in their homes.

With farmers about to start planting season, the Sheriff said he anticipates fuel, tool and vehicle thefts will increase in the area. He said residents should remember this when they leave tractors, UTVs, and trucks parked in fields as thieves look for easy opportunities to steal hard-earned properties.

“The public is law enforcement’s greatest asset, you know what is normal in your area and what is suspicious,” Merchant said. “With your information, we have held many people accountable for their actions.”

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