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Special Neighborhood Alert

**Burglaries prompt Police to urge residents to close, secure doors and windows
07.29.09**

Four residential burglaries in less than four hours early Wednesday morning have Oak Park Police reminding residents of the importance of securing all doors and windows at night.

A burglar entered the four homes in the area bounded by Division Street, Chicago Avenue, Ridgeland Avenue and Oak Park Avenue, between 2 a.m. and 6 a.m., and took miscellaneous personal property while the residents slept. In three of the incidents, the thief entered through unlocked rear doors, and in the fourth, reached through an open, unlocked window after cutting the screen.

As the investigation continues, police are urging residents to take the following precautions:

- Close and lock all windows and doors at night or install devices that limit the travel of the sash or door.
- Make sure outdoor furniture, rain barrels or other items cannot be used as a makeshift ladder to reach higher windows.
- Install and use good lighting – features like motion detectors and automatic dusk-to-dawn switching are especially effective.
- Consider audible alarms on entry points.
- Prominently post an alarm system warning decal.
- Get to know your neighbors so you can keep an eye out for each other's property.

For more security tips and even an assessment of your home, contact your RBO (Resident Beat Officer), who will examine your property and offer practical suggestions for improving security – visit www.oak-park.us/police for more information.

Don't hesitate to call 9-1-1...

Oak Park Police rely on residents. If you see unusual activity, suspicious people or vehicles in your neighborhood, call 9-1-1 immediately.

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Preventing residential and garage burglaries

Home and garage burglaries are among the most common crimes in Oak Park. Burglars may use ordinary tools such as screwdrivers and crowbars to pry open weak locks, or simply break a window or kick in a door. However, in more than a third of the burglaries, offenders don't use force at all – they just walk through an unlocked door or crawl through an unlocked window. With just a few simple steps, property owners can reduce the likelihood of becoming a burglary victim.

Protect your home

- Close and lock all doors and windows.
- Install audible alarms on entry points.
- Prominently post an alarm system warning decal.
- Increase outdoor lighting – use motion sensors to save electricity.
- Get to know your neighbors so you can keep an eye out for each other's property.

Protect your garage

- Keep the doorframe and locks in good condition – use a deadbolt with long screws that reach well in the frame structure.
- Always lock the side service door – in half of all garage burglaries in Oak Park, the thief walked through an unlocked service door.
- Cover windows so a thief can't see what is inside.
- Make sure the overhead door is closed completely before leaving the garage.
- Install good lighting – features like motion detectors and automatic dusk-to-dawn switching are especially effective.

How thieves think...

Burglars consider the following when selecting targets:

- Familiarity and convenience – how well do I know this neighborhood?
- Occupancy – can I easily tell if anyone is home?
- Visibility – can I get in and out without being seen?
- Accessibility – how easily and how fast can I get in and out?
- Vulnerability and security – is the resident elderly or is there a security system?
- Potential rewards – what will I get for the risk?

Keep up to date on criminal activity in the neighborhood – attend your monthly Resident Beat Officer (RBO) meeting. Visit www.oak-park.us/police for schedules.

Oak Park Police Department

Committed to community, integrity and excellence in public safety

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Always call 9-1-1 in an emergency.
