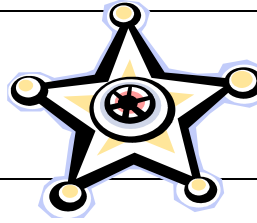




Zone 5 Newsletter

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Zone 5 Borders
Oak Park Ave. to Harlem Ave.
Harrison St. to South Blvd.

Active citizen participation helps Keep crime low in 2008

Crime data compiled under the categories established by the state's Uniform Crime Reporting Index, or URC, placed 2008 in the books as the fourth lowest crime rate for Oak Park in the past 25 years. Police credit citizens willing to report suspicious activity for helping keep crime low.

Property crimes remained the largest categories, according to the data, with thefts alone — primarily bicycles and items left visible in vehicles — representing nearly two-thirds of all 2008 crime in Oak Park. Add in burglaries — mostly garage entries — and these incidents police call crimes of opportunity represented nearly 85 percent of all criminal activity in the community.

Police did report an increase in robberies from 2007's historic low. Forty-seven more robberies were reported in 2008 than in 2007, a number similar to those reported in 2006. However, the 160 robberies committed in 2008 remained down some 50 percent over the course of the last two decades. Robbery arrests also were up in 2008 over the prior year, an important statistic, police say, because a single criminal often is responsible for multiple incidents.

The continued historically low crime rate is remarkable, police say, given that Oak Park shares a border with the nation's third largest city. And while the trend in crime over the past 25 years is noticeably down overall, police say more can be done — especially if residents don't hesitate to call 9-1-1 when they see anything suspicious or out of the ordinary, as well as get to know their neighbors and Resident Beat Officer (RBO).

Police simply cannot be everywhere, but residents can and are. Police know that residents are aware when something is not right, whether it is on the block, in the alley or with a neighbor's garage. But it is the willingness to pick up a telephone and call 9-1-1 that is essential to keeping crime down, police say. More than 38,000 Oak Parkers did just that in 2008, and police were on the scene in a little more than three minutes of an emergency call.

For more information on crime in Oak Park, contact your RBO — just call 708.386.3800 or visit www.oak-park.us/police.

Crime Prevention Tips

- Keep garage outside lights on at night or have motion detectors
- Close and lock all garage doors
- Lock your vehicle — even if it's in a garage
- Don't leave valuables such as cell phones and laptop computers visible in your vehicle — take them with you or lock them in the trunk
- Keep your home's outside light on at night or have motion detectors
- Close and lock all windows and doors at night
- When away, use timers to turn on lights for individual rooms in the house
- If you are out of town, have a neighbor pick up newspapers and mail
- Have your RBO perform a security check of your home and provide tips on how to improve security
- When out alone, always be aware of your surroundings
- When walking to your vehicle, have your car keys out
- Park in a lighted area — and check the interior of the vehicle before entering
- Don't carry a purse or large amounts of money
- Be aware of your surroundings — criminals watch for individuals who are distracted by cell phones and iPods
- Listen to your gut — if something feels wrong, it probably is
- Look out for each other — this doesn't mean stepping into a criminal incident, but being willing to call police
- Report any suspicious persons, vehicles or activity as soon as possible — be ready to give a description
- Don't hesitate to call 9-1-1 — never worry about inconveniencing an officer — police would rather stop a crime than try to solve it after the fact

Police to sell unclaimed bicycles

More than 300 bicycles recovered by Police over the past year, but not claimed by their owners, will be sold on a first-come, first-served basis from 9 a.m. – noon, Sat., May 30, at 260 Madison St. Bicycles range in size, style and condition, and will be sold as-is. Payment may be made with cash or check. For a description of bicycles visit www.oak-park.us/police.

Bicycle Safety and Security Tips

The best way to educate motorists on bicyclists' rights to the road is to ride respectfully and have facts on your side. Here are some resources for cyclists and drivers on sharing the road.

On the Road:

- > The same laws that apply to motorists apply to cyclists
- > Obey all traffic control devices
- > Use hand signals to indicate stops and turns other users

Always Wear a Properly Fitting Helmet:

- > Wear a helmet, no matter how short the trip

Ride on the Right:

- > Always ride in the same direction as traffic
- > Use the furthest right lane that heads to your destination
- > Slower moving cyclists and motorists stay to the right

Ride Predictable:

- > Ride in a straight line
- > Don't swerve in the road or between parked cars
- > Check for traffic before entering street or intersection

Be Visible:

- > Wear brightly colored clothing that provides contrast
- > Use a white front light in low light conditions
- > Use a red rear light in low light conditions
- > Use a reflector or reflective tape or clothing anytime
- > Announce yourself by making eye contact with motorists

Don't Loose Your Bike

- Register your bike with the Police Department.
- Never leave your bike unlocked or unattended.
- Use a heavy lock, such as a case-hardened U-lock that can't easily be cut.
- Lock your bike even when it is stored in a closed garage, enclosed porch or basement common area.
- Call the police immediately if you see anyone suspicious hanging around a bike rack, in a neighbor's yard or near a garage.
- Warn children never to let anyone but a trusted friend ride their bike and not to be fooled by strangers who ask to borrow their bike.

A Day in Our Village festival is June 7

The 36th annual A Day in Our Village festival celebrating diversity and community involvement is scheduled for Sun., June 7. The all-inclusive, annual festival allows residents to become volunteers, join an organization, patronize a local merchant or service, meet neighbors, enjoy special activities, make new friends, join a congregation and generally support the community spirit. More than 150 activity booths representing Oak Park civic, cultural, social service, educational, religious and business organizations will fill Scoville Park (Lake Street at Oak Park Avenue) from 11 a.m. – 6 p.m. A range of activities is planned, along with live performances and a food court featuring local restaurants. Rehm Park & Pool (Garfield Street at East Avenue) also will offer many activities from noon – 5 p.m. Oak Park Township's mini-buses will provide free transportation between venues. For more information, call 708.358.5408 or e-mail community@oak-park.us.

Slow down and help make Oak Park a safe town

One of the biggest complaints that I receive everyday is concerning traffic safety. Citizens complain of motorists who violate traffic laws and use our streets as their own personal raceway. In response to these complaints our Department has taken great steps to enhance its traffic enforcement. As complaints are taken in, major hot spots are identified and focused on with increased patrols. To my surprise, a large percentage of offenders are also Village residents. This is very upsetting! It is up to us to ensure the safety of our streets. So keep in mind and take your time, to obey our traffic laws.

The three *most common* violations are:

◆ Speeding.

Most of Oak Park's side streets are 25 MPH and most of the main streets are 30 MPH.

◆ Disobeying Stop Signs.

Always make a complete stop at the marked stop line. A good rule of thumb is to stop and count to three, before proceeding. No "Hollywood Stops" please!

◆ Failing to signal when required.

Remember that signaling is required 100 ft. prior to making a turn. If your vehicle's signals don't work then the use of hand/arm signals are acceptable.

With a little time and effort I believe that we can all make a difference in reducing traffic violations. Together we can continue to keep Oak Park's streets safe for all.