

WESTERN SPRINGS POLICE DEPARTMENT



CRIME ALERT

Western Springs, IL – August 27, 2013

Ruse-Related Crime Alert

Spring, summer, and fall are very active times for two serious crimes routinely committed against our elderly residents -

- Home repair fraud
- Ruse entry burglary

Over the past week, the Police Department has been actively investigating two reported ruse-related crimes. The first occurred in the 4100 block of Johnson Ave. and the second in the 4700 block of Howard Ave. It is unknown if both incidents involved the same suspects.

The appearance of these offenders can be generally described as medium to dark complexioned Caucasians, who are often mistaken as Hispanic. Dark hair and eyes are also common characteristics. The number of suspects involved can be between two and six. At times, women and children will accompany a male suspect or two women will work as a team. A look-out accomplice is typically used and will usually sit in a waiting vehicle and sound the horn if the police are spotted. It should be noted they are experts at false identification and will use a variation of family names and birth dates.

Individuals who commit these crimes are often career criminals specializing in home repair fraud and ruse entries. They primarily target senior citizens who are ideal suspects for their crimes. They are experts with profiling senior citizen homes. They will target a residence by focusing on the style of drapes, poorly maintained landscaping, and/or an exterior in need of repair.

Home Repair Fraud:

These offenders will frequent residential neighborhoods searching for elderly people outside their homes. They then will approach a senior citizen and offer to do some kind of home repair work such as driveway seal coating, tree trimming, roof repairs, etc. The price might be very low, or very high, if the price quoted is low, generally when the work is completed the money asked will be much higher. Any work done is usually poor

quality. If given the opportunity, the suspects may commit a residential burglary to the home by distracting the resident while another offender searches the home.

Ruse Entry (Burglary):

After selecting a home by profiling it, an offender will claim to be a utility worker, Village employee, or contractor. They will enter the victim's home using the ruse of checking on faulty equipment (water pressure, electrical panel, gas meter, etc). While one offender keeps the victim occupied by taking them downstairs or outside to check on the alleged faulty equipment, one or more offenders enter the home undetected and commit a burglary.

How can you protect yourself from becoming a victim:

- Never allow someone to perform driveway seal coating or any home repairs on the spot. Ask for a business card to check on the reputation of the business and end the conversation. If possible get a license plate number and inform the police department immediately. Do not discuss or negotiate work they are interested in doing because they will tell you that you are getting a great deal because they just completed a job in the neighborhood and have some extra material. If you tell them to come back another day, they will pressure you by saying, "It will cost you a lot more money if we have to come back."
- Never let anyone in your home - if someone claims they need assistance, tell them you will contact the police department to assist them. If they indicate they are with a utility company, call the utility company to verify the work.
- If you are approached while you are outside, do not let anyone roam around your property. This usually gives them an opportunity to check for open doors while you are being distracted.

Please contact the Western Springs Police Investigations Division at (708)-246-1800 ext. 159 if you would like additional information.
