



Hernando County Sheriff's Office

A STATE ACCREDITED LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY

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Media Release

From: Sergeant Donna Black
Public Information Officer, 352-797-3609

Re: Burglaries in Royal Highlands- Awareness Message

Date: March 11, 2010

Our community as well as other communities across the State of Florida has been affected by the blight of foreclosed homes. These abandoned homes have become easy picking grounds for thieves who strip appliances, copper and other valuables. The thieves scrap the appliances and or parts for a small fraction of the actual value.

In Hernando County the area referred to as Royal Highlands which is located along SR 50 west of Sunshine Grove Rd, north to Citrus County has been especially hard hit. Between March 1, 2009 and March 10, 2010 there have been 81 homes that have either been burglarized or experienced theft of copper from the exterior air conditioning units. The loss of property during that time frame totals \$64,990.00.

These crimes can go undetected for long periods of time because no one is taking care of the property or checking on it on a regular basis. Some times even homes not in foreclosure can sit vacant for months to years due to the owners residing in other states or even out of the country.

The Hernando County Sheriff's Office would like to pass on some tips to the public to assist law enforcement in apprehending the people responsible for these crimes.

- ❖ Be vigilant in your neighborhood and report suspicious vehicles and/or activity around vacant homes.
- ❖ Record the serial numbers of all of your appliances in the event you experience a theft. In order for law enforcement to enter the item into the national stolen data base we must have make, model and serial number of the item.
- ❖ Remember: appearances can be deceiving and these crimes can occur in broad daylight. Criminals can dress like repairmen and/or construction personnel to make them look legitimate; so if you see people removing appliances or working on air conditioners at abandoned homes call the Hernando County Sheriff's Office and let us verify they have permission to be on the property. If you are able without putting yourself in harms way obtain a vehicle description, tag number, direction of travel, description of the suspect(s) please do so.
- ❖ If you see local Hernando/Citrus/Pasco/Sumter County online classifieds that seem "too good to be true" report it especially if they are selling appliances. If you see the same seller with multiple listings of similar items report it. Suspects will sometimes use different names but the same e-mail, phone number or other contact info on separate listings.

If you have information regarding this crime, please contact the Hernando County Sheriff's Office at 352-754-6830. If you wish to remain anonymous, call the Hernando County Crime Stoppers toll free at 1-866-990-8477(TIPS) or you may email your tip by clicking below.

<http://www.hernadosheriff.org/Tips/>

You may be eligible for a reward up to \$1,000.

- ❖ Report ATV operators who appear to be “casing” homes in the area. Detectives have information that ATV riders could be involved in locating perspective houses to loot and sometimes even entering homes and stealing smaller items. If you see ATV operators driving with a backpack, pillow case, or other item that can possibly be used to carry stolen items report it. It is suspected that ATV operators while casing vacant homes will break into occupied homes while the occupants are at work/school (daytime burglaries). These criminals have taken the victim(s) pillow case or other item to carry the stolen valuables in. There is a possibility the thief could be someone from your neighborhood so if you see a neighbor with an ATV coming home with possible stolen items report it to law enforcement.

If the crime is in progress please call 911. If you have information about a crime that has already occurred and you want to remain anonymous call Hernando County Crime Stoppers toll free at 1-866-990-TIPS (8477), email a non traceable tip via Crime Stopper. *The rewards are paid in cash, at a local bank totally anonymously, you can even use the drive through with no questions asked. All tipsters are given a unique tipster number, no names are used and the tipster can even designate a 3rd party to pick up the tip money once the arrest is made .*

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