

# Village of Northfield Police Department

350 Walnut  
Northfield, IL 60093

(847) 446-3908 fax  
(847) 446-2131



Chief of Police  
William K. Lustig

June 11th, 2014

Dear Northfield Resident,

In the recent months, the Village of Northfield and Chicago suburbs have experienced burglaries. Most of these burglaries have taken place during the day. Some of these burglaries have been gypsy scams of home repair fraud or ruse entry. I want to take a few moments of your time to talk to you about safety tips to help reduce the risk of becoming a burglary victim.

➤ **Keep doors and windows closed and securely fastened.**

*An open window or door is an invitation for burglars. Make sure every external door has a sturdy, well-installed deadbolt lock with a minimum of 1 ½ inch bolt and reinforced strike plate with 3 inch screws.*

➤ **Secure sliding glass doors with commercially available vertical locks to prevent burglars from forcing door open or lifting it off the track.**

*A broomstick or metal rod placed in the track may prevent the door from being forced open, but may not stop the door from being lifted out of its track.*

**Safety Tips to discourage burglars from selecting your home as a potential target:**

➤ **Trim shrubbery that hides doors or windows.**

*Although tree and shrubbery may be beautiful, they also provide a hiding place for burglars. Cut tree limbs that could help an intruder climb into windows. Remember that a burglar may only need a minute to break into a window or door.*

➤ **Keep the perimeter of your home well lighted.**

*Illuminate porches, entrances and front/back yards. Use timers for exterior lights or install motion detectors. There are 3 types of lighting devices that use 10% of the electricity and last 10 times longer than the filament bulbs. Spiral Wound devices are readily available in a multitude of sizes and power ratings. Bright, concentrated LED devices are used in continuous or intermittent Spot Lights and Flash Lights. Diffused LED devices provide evenly lighted Flat Panels. The light intensities of all types are controllable. A lighting specialty store can assist you in choosing the appropriate lights for your needs.*

- Never leave clues that you are away on a trip.  
*Put lights and a radio on timers to create the illusion that someone is at home when you go away. Leave shades, blinds, and curtains in positions to maintain a normal everyday appearance. Cancel newspapers and mail when you are out of town for a period of time.*
- Keep your yard well maintained.  
*Store ladders and tools inside your locked garage or basement.*
- Clearly display your house number, so police and other emergency vehicles can find your home quickly.

### **Gypsy Scams:**

Gypsies (individuals of Gypsy culture who have elected to live a criminal lifestyle) who commit these types of crimes are usually career criminals, and specialize in this kind of criminal activity. Note that it is the “style”, and not the “con” that identifies the crime as Gypsies. Traditionally, these types of Gypsy crimes are generally non-violent.

Gypsies who commit these crimes are career criminals specializing in home repair fraud and ruse entries. They primarily target the elderly, who are ideal suspects for their crimes. Gypsies are experts with profiling senior citizen’s homes. They will target a home by the style of drapes, poorly maintained lawns, single garbage cans, and four-door sedans.

- **Home Repair Fraud**  
*Gypsies cruise residential neighborhoods searching for elderly person outside their homes. Once located, they approach the elderly person and offer to do some sort of home repair “work” (driveway seal coating, tree trimming, roof repairs, etc.) The price might be very low, or very high, depending on the mental state of the victim. If the price quoted is low, generally when the work is completed, the money asked is much higher. Any work done is usually substandard in nature. If given the opportunity, the suspects may commit a residential burglary to the home by distracting (occupying) the home owner while another crew member searches the home.*
- **Ruse Entry (Burglary)**  
*Again, after selecting a home by profiling it, a Gypsy will claim to be a utility worker, city employee, or a contractor. They then will enter the home using the ruse of checking something (water pressure, fuses, pipes, etc.). While one Gypsy keeps the victim occupied (running water, checking lights, checking property lines, or even directing the home owner to the rear of the house to view out the back window), one or more additional gypsies enter the home (undetected) and commit a burglary.*

### **How to Protect Yourself:**

- Never allow someone to perform driveway sealing, or 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 vehicle plate number and inform the police department of the activity. Do not deliberate or debate work that needs to be done. Gypsies will press a sense of urgency.
- Never let anyone into your home – if someone claims they need assistance, tell them you will contact the police 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 your property. This usually gives them an opportunity to check for open doors while you are being distracted.

### **Other Safety Tips:**

- Do not put notes on your door or leave messages on your telephone answering machine noting when you will return.
- Do not allow “unexpected” repairmen or deliverymen entry into your home. Verify the identity of workmen before allowing entry. Never leave workers unsupervised – they could easily remove your belongings.
- Upon your request, and as a free service of the Northfield Police Department, an officer will conduct a security check of your home to point out any weaknesses in security and to make recommendations to provide greater security.

Residents are urged to remain vigilant and to please call the Northfield Police Department by dialing 9-1-1 to report anything suspicious. Do not take suspicious sounds or people for granted.

For instance:

- If you see any suspicious vehicles driving slowly or repetitively through your neighborhood; or
- Observe someone at a neighbor’s front door and subsequently see them walking to the side or rear of the house.

Call 9-1-1. If possible, write down the description of the person and his or her vehicle and license plate number. If you have any questions, please call us at 847-446-2131. Through your assistance, the Northfield Police Department is better able to insure the safety of the community.

Sincerely,

William K. Lustig, Chief of Police