



BLUFFTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

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Since the first of June, the Bluffton community has seen an inordinate number of thefts and burglaries. This uptick in crime is disconcerting to residents as well as law enforcement officials. We recognize the importance of having police officers visibly patrolling the neighborhoods with the hope of deterring criminal activity. The reality is very few crimes are actually interrupted by police officers "catching them in the act." Those odds are greatly favored when homeowners take measures to secure their property – be it locking cars, out buildings, garages, and homes.

Living in a "small town" traditionally affords residents the ability to have laid back lifestyles. As such, we are completely accustomed to leaving homes and cars unlocked, purses in plain view, and garage doors open at times. Sadly, that part of our "small town" lifestyle is allowing for one or more bad guys to easily access these areas and make off with items easily carried and concealed.

For our community to combat this recent outbreak of illicit activity, we are going to have to work together to achieve a safe resolution. Here are some things that we can do collectively to work toward apprehending the criminals:

1. The growing drug problem frequently referred to as a "city" issue has infiltrated our community. Sadly, Bluffton is not unlike almost every other community in Ohio dealing with this issue. Somewhere "out there" are family and friends of a person or persons struggling with addiction. We need those family and friends to reach out for help for their loved one to help them break the addictive cycle and get them off drugs. Until we work to solve the global problem of drug abuse, we are going to have people who steal to get their next "fix."
2. While our officers are trying to be more visible and responsive, the timely call to 911 is equally important to get the officer(s) in the right neighborhood at the right time. We encourage residents and business leaders to call 911 immediately when they hear or see something that raises their eyebrows. You don't have to have proof something happened in order to call 911.
3. Locking doors, cars, and outbuildings will do several things. First it hardens the target to slow the "bad guy" down. Second, it may cause the bad guy to make enough noise that draws attention to themselves. Third, it may result in physical or biological evidence being left behind that links suspects to crimes.
4. Be mindful about leaving purses (the current object of choice) out of sight. Lock them in car trunks or put them in closets at home. Again, this may cause the crooks to look elsewhere or draw attention to themselves.

Our agency has been as proactive with this recent bout of crimes as we can be. Some other efforts include community notices through the media and Nixle, increased nighttime patrols, and coordinating with area law enforcement agencies. We were successful on June 17th when a local resident called 911 to report someone breaking into cars. Police officers were in the area and a foot chase ensued. The resulting investigation garnered two adjudications for juveniles with one case still pending. Our officers have also been more aggressive in stopping to identify pedestrians walking after dark. We will continue this practice as well as enforcing appropriate laws regarding bicycle riding. All options for enforcing laws and identifying people out at night will be used.

Together we can achieve solutions to this problem. If anyone has questions, suggestions, or tips, please feel free to contact the Bluffton Police Department at 419-358-2961 or on our tip line at 419-369-2970.

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