

Experts offer tips

Low turnout for police's vandalism discussion

By LORI TAYLOR
Herald staff writer

The turnout was low at the Homeowner's Night sponsored by the Neighborhood Watch program to assist homeowners in protecting their property from vandals and burglars.

Program leader Ruth Geurts expressed her regret at the small turnout, but the program proceeded as planned with remarks from Sgt. Tom Johnson of Halton Regional Police and Bob Lovell of Chubb Security, and a film entitled, "Home and Property Protection".

Georgetown has a vandalism problem, just as the same is everywhere else, Sgt. Johnson told the audience. He said the reported incidents of vandalism in Milton, Georgetown and Acton increased six per cent in the first six months of 1979 to 415 from 390 incidents in the first six months of 1978.

"That may not sound like much, but we don't have an enormous population here, and it's not growing that fast," he said.

ARSON CHARGE

Those incidents don't include such acts of vandalism as the fire on the McDonald's caboose, Sgt. Johnson said, because the accused in that incident have been charged with arson.

One of the major vandalism problems in Georgetown and in Milton are the lighted street lamps, Sgt. Johnson said. The lights are constantly being broken, "and our taxes are paying to replace them. I don't know how much they cost, but they aren't cheap."

Sgt. Johnson emphasized that if the police are to proceed with the laying of charges against vandals, they must have the co-operation of the public. He said citizens who report an act of vandalism, particularly if they witness the vandalism, should be prepared to testify in court.

Unless the police get a confession from the vandal when they confront him or her, they must have someone to testify to seeing the incident. A police officer can't testify in court that someone told him they saw the accused in the act, Sgt. Johnson said. That is hearsay evidence, and is not admissible.

"I know how people feel, when it's the breadwinner in the family, and he has to spend a day in court waiting for the case to come up," Sgt. Johnson said. "Particularly if he's paid on an hourly basis. Witness fees aren't that high that they can make up for a day's salary



Bob Lovell of Chubb Security talked to homeowners last week at a meeting sponsored by Neighborhood Watch about making their homes more secure and deterring burglars. Here he shows some of the hardware that can deter people from breaking into a house, or slow them down, or sound an alarm to frighten them off.

(Herald photo)

lost." "But the courts will do everything they can to convince the witness," he added. "They aren't going to set a court date for the middle of your vacation."

BEST WAY

When homeowners go away on vacation, the best way to ensure their home remains secure is to have a neighbor check daily, inside and out, Sgt. Johnson said. The neighbor can leave different lights on and turn on the radio or

television, to give potential burglars the idea that someone is at home.

"Ninety-nine per cent of burglars won't break in if they have the slightest suspicion someone is there," Sgt. Johnson said. "They're very nervous. If you use a timer to turn your lights on and off while you're away, I'd recommend hooking the television or radio into it as well. If someone sees lights on, they'll stand around outside for a while, and if they don't hear any noise, they'll break in."

If the neighbor checks the home daily, he can notify the police if he spots something out of place, Sgt. Johnson said. "Make sure he has a key," he said. "You can't tell if anything's wrong from the outside."

Burglars usually go for cash, liquor and sometimes jewelry, Sgt. Johnson said. Jewelry is less likely to get taken because it is easily identifiable, he said.

Sgt. Johnson said that while he was not advocating citizens use them, there are certain powers of arrest which a citizen can make use of, particularly when it involves a child performing an act of vandalism. Most acts of vandalism are performed by young children, he said, and the Canadian

Criminal Code says a citizen may detain any person they apprehend committing an indictable offense. An indictable offense includes crimes such as mischief and theft. Wilful damage is a summary offense, Sgt. Johnson said, and doesn't fall under that category.

"I'm not saying, Go out and do it," Sgt. Johnson said. "I wouldn't encourage a citizen to go after a full-sized adult."

ARREST PERSON

The criminal code also permits anyone owning property, or in lawful possession of property, or an authorized designate, to arrest a person committing any criminal offense, Sgt. Johnson said. If a homeowner, or the neighbor he has asked to watch his property, should find someone vandalizing the property, that person is empowered by law to detain that person, "and turn him over to a peace officer, forthwith," Sgt. Johnson said.

Mr. Lovell from Chubb brought along a number of locks and samples of burglary tools to demonstrate home security to the audience. He said there is no foolproof way of safeguarding a home from burglars, and most security equipment is designed to deter burglars or to delay them and increase the chance of someone observing them trying to

break in.

"The first line of defence is a good lock," he said. Lock-picking equipment is fairly easily accessible, and careless homeowners often provide opportunities for criminals to duplicate keys, so it's necessary to have a good lock which will resist burglars for as long as possible, and to avoid giving anyone an opportunity to make a duplicate of the key, he said.

Mr. Lovell said one of the big mistakes some people make is leaving their house keys, with address attached, on a key ring with their car keys in a parking lot. The attendants can get \$500 for the copy of a business key, and lesser amounts for a house key, provided they can identify the location of the house and business, he said.

Mr. Lovell said most thieves use other materials to open locks now, rather than the old credit card trick.

"After all, why ruin a perfectly good credit card?" he asked.

For burglars with higher notions, lock-picking tools are available through trade publications, he said.

"When it arrives in the mail, it doesn't come with 'Burglars' Tools' stamped all over it," he said. "The problem is, lock-picking tools are not confined to lock-smiths."

Mr. Lovell said one of the best locks a homeowner can buy is a Finnish lock called an Abloy lock. It is constructed in a fashion similar to the tumblers in a safe, and the knob which releases the lock can also be locked so burglars can't open it by breaking the glass on the door.

KEY COPIES

Copies of keys are different to get with an Abloy lock as well, Mr. Lovell said. A set of three keys comes with the lock, and the buyer must sign a card, a copy of which is kept on file at Chubb Security. When the owner wants a new key, he submits a request to Chubb, and the signature on the request must match the signature on the card. The copy of the key will be sent to the address which Chubb has on file, Mr. Lovell said.

Mr. Lovell said the Abloy

lock has yet to be successfully opened by any means other than with the proper key.

"A good lock is probably one of the best deterrents for burglars, and a sticker saying your property is marked for identification is good too," Mr. Lovell said.

The advent of the garage sale and the giant flea market has caused an increase in crime, Mr. Lovell said, because it makes it easier to dispose of stolen property.

He suggested homeowners considering purchasing a burglar alarm make sure that they buy one which will turn itself off after a set period of time. Otherwise, if the homeowner isn't home when it goes off, the neighbors might use extraordinary means to shut the noise off, he said.

Mr. Lovell and Miss Geurts both warned against homeow-

ners, especially rural people, being confident that their home is secure simply because they have a dog. Miss Geurts said her family had been the victim of a break-in, and they

had seven dogs at the time. "If a burglar sees a dog on the property, and there's no one home, there's nothing simpler than a .22 to stop the dog," she said.

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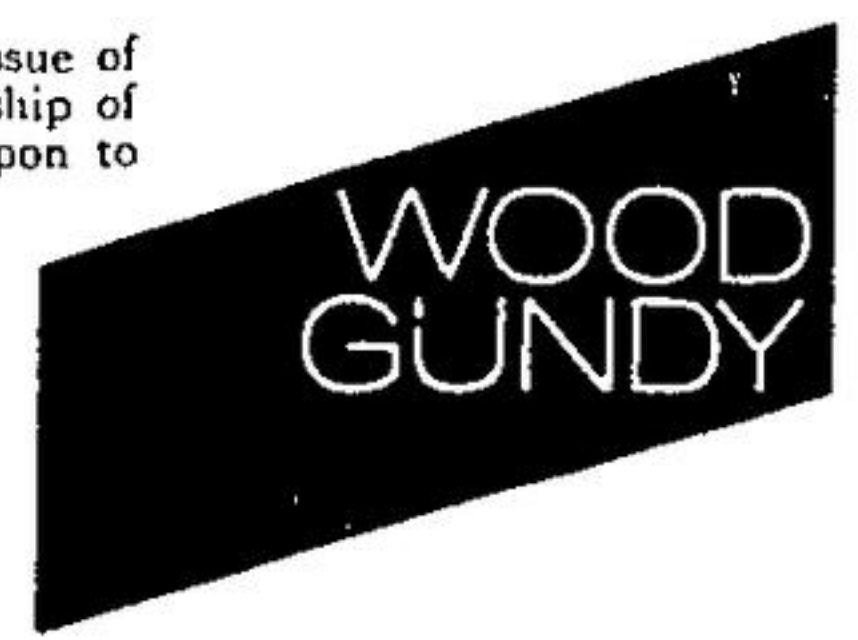
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Waterfront patrol talk planned

The Peel Regional Police Commission plans to hold an informal meeting this fall with chiefs of police and representatives from police commissions along the Lake Ontario waterfront to discuss the patrolling of Lake Ontario.

The Peel Regional Police Commission has decided that in view of budgetary restraints they would restrict their marine patrol to the Credit River, W.W. Appleton, chairman of the commission, told the Halton commission in a letter. They notified the provincial and federal governments of their intention.

Solicitor-General Roy McMurtry said the Ontario Provincial Police would not be doing any patrolling of the lake, and then Transport Minister Otto Lang said that the Canadian Coast Guard based at Port Weller could carry out search and rescue services, but would not be providing police services.

Deputy-chief W.I. Harding, acting chief of Halton Regional Police, said there is "total confusion" about who is responsible for patrolling Lake Ontario. He said he plans to attend the meeting. The invitation has

been extended to the police chiefs and commissioners in Niagara, Hamilton-Wentworth Halton, Metro Toronto and Durham.

Halton police commission chairman Harry Barrett said that it would not be possible for Halton Regional Police to take on the job of patrolling right out to the international boundary with the present grant structure.

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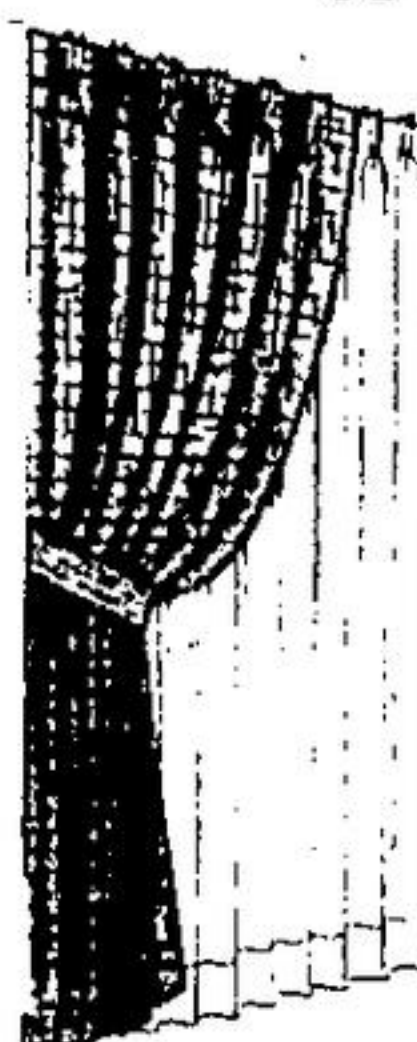


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