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CRIME: Fewer cases solved last year

Break-ins down in York, but keep your guard up

BY JOE FANTAUZZI
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While break-ins have been decreasing in York Region the past five years, police are still keeping a close eye and urging you to keep your home secure.

According to York Regional Police, there were 12 residential break-ins from July 30 to Tuesday in Aurora, Newmarket, Thornhill, Vaughan and Georgina.

The force will also dispatch special officers to visit break-in sites to collect evidence left at the scene and to speak to witnesses, such as neighbours...

Thieves may watch homes for several days for tell-tale signs no one is home, including open windows and unlocked doors, Sgt. Gary Phillips said.

"If your home doesn't look lived in, you're a target," he warned.

There were 2,606 break-ins reported to York police last year, an increase from 2,531

in 2009.

But, while the total number of break-ins in York has fluctuated the past five years, the annual total has consistently been below a high mark of 3,291 in 2006, police statistics show.

Typically, those committing break-ins are looking for items easily convertible to cash, such as jewelry, electronics, liquor and money, Sgt. Phillips said.

A family can be traumatized by a break-in, he added.

The rate at which break-and-enters were solved fell slightly from 28.4 per cent in 2009 to 26.7 per cent in 2010. But last year's clearance rate is still higher than 2006, 2007 and 2008.

Meanwhile, the top priority for officers investigating break-ins across the region is reuniting owners with their stolen goods, Sgt. Phillips said.

The force will also dispatch special officers to visit break-in sites to collect evidence left at the scene and to speak to witnesses, such as neighbours, which reinforces the importance of getting to know the people who live in your community, Sgt. Phillips added.

"Your neighbours can be your eyes while you're gone," he said.

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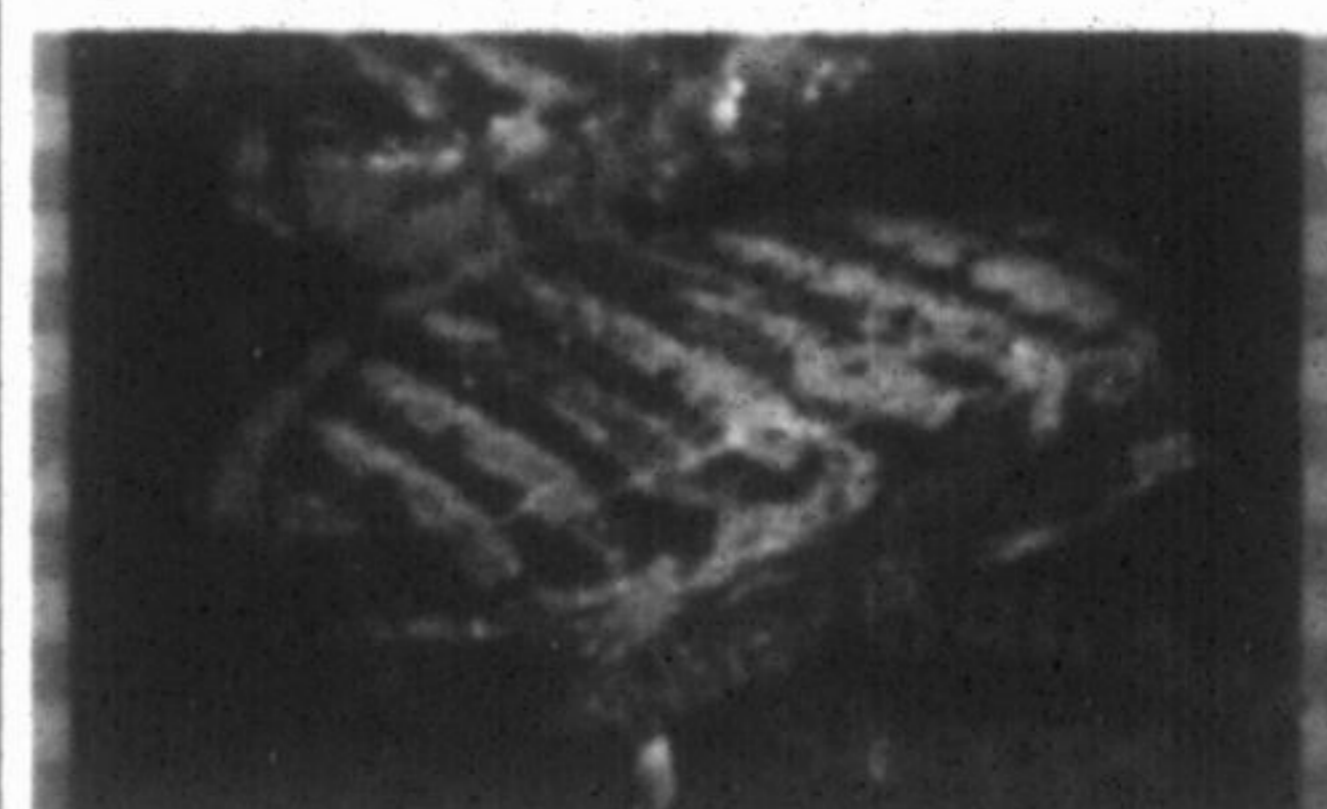
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