

Property damage is on the rise, again. Most often, these crimes are committed by juveniles after dark and they target backyards and vehicles. Officers patrol over a hundred miles a night through the streets of Winnebago, but we cannot be everywhere at once. While we do our part to reduce the number of criminal damage to property reports, we need your help in order to eliminate this new trend.

Here are some simple steps that you can take at home to reduce your chances of being our next police report for property damage:

1. Add lights.
 - a. Motion detector lights are great because they not only alert the trespasser that they have been caught, they alert you that something is on your property.
 - b. Add landscape lights around entrances to backyards and by vehicles that are parked in driveways.
 - c. Make sure your exterior lights are on at night and that all of the bulbs are functional.
2. Lock Everything.
 - a. Lock your vehicles, doors, windows AND gates to your fence. If you have a fence, you put it up because you wanted to keep people out. If you don't lock your gate, the whole fence is pointless.
3. Avoid using rock in landscaping.
 - a. While white and gray rock may be very pretty, you are providing ammunition to would-be damagers.
4. Get to know your neighbors.
 - a. By knowing your neighbors and their normal habits, you will be able to notice when something is wrong more quickly.
 - b. *A great way to get to know your neighbors and prevent crime in your neighborhood is start a Neighborhood Watch Group. Contact your beat officer for more information.*
5. Don't over-think calling the police.
 - a. If you hear or see something that just doesn't feel right, more than likely, it isn't. When we are completing a property damage report, more often than not the homeowner tells us they heard a dog bark or a noise that just didn't sound right, and they *thought* about calling the police, but didn't. Never feel silly or that you are "blowing things out of proportion" when calling the Non-Emergency Dispatch at **815-282-2600** to report a possible property damage. What may seem as insignificant often leads to arrests of perpetrators.

Individuals who commit property damage crimes are difficult to catch because they are quick and they do their crimes at night, while people are sleeping. By reducing their opportunity to commit crime and being aware of activity in your neighborhood, you can help us police your neighborhood.