



HALL COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

CRIME PREVENTION BULLETIN



DATE: May 13, 2011
SUBJECT: "Scouting" and Burglary Tactics

Please don't misunderstand the subject line of this bulletin; I'm in no way about to link the Boy Scouts of America to criminal activity. Rather, we often talk about how burglars and thieves will use various tactics to check out homes as potential targets for their crimes, while seeming to be perfectly legitimate in the process. We generally refer to this as "scouting," and its possible incarnations are limited only to the imagination. We sometimes speculate that people are scouting neighborhoods, but most of the time someone has observed or made contact with the person and deterred the crime, so it remains speculation (that's a good thing). However, one recent example was in fact later proven to be a criminal looking for homes to target.

As you may have seen in the local media, a Dawsonville man was recently arrested for a string of burglaries in Dawson and Hall Counties. Here's the link to the story as it appeared in The Gainesville Times:

<http://www.gainesvilletimes.com/archives/48921/>

As it turns out, this individual was seen and reported by a resident in an area where he has eventually charged with at least one burglary. It wasn't until later that we learned that he and the burglary suspect are one in the same. Here's the short version of events:

The resident came home one afternoon to find a stranger in his driveway. He approached the stranger, who stated that he worked for a finance company and that he was attempting to make contact with (insert fictitious name here), a person who owed a lot of money to the finance company. His story was that he had information indicating that someone at this house knew the person he was looking for. While the stranger didn't offer a card or any type of proof of his story, he was fairly clean-cut, neatly dressed, and well spoken. Our resident was still skeptical, so he told the stranger that he was mistaken and sent him on his way, but not before noting the vehicle's tag number and description. He reported the incident to our office, but at the time no information that we had indicated that the subject was wanted or involved in any type of impropriety. Several weeks later however, we checked the tag number again to discover that the vehicle was registered to the live-in girlfriend of the subject mentioned in the news article above, and that one of the homes that he'd burglarized was just down the street from this one. Our skeptical resident had unknowingly just prevented his own home from being burglarized. This incident illustrates several points for us to consider:

Scouting

There are countless ways for criminals to conduct reconnaissance. Take nothing for granted, and always examine a stranger's presence in your neighborhood from a critical perspective. Ask for a business card or ID if you make contact with someone purporting to be there on business.

Appearances

Criminals don't always look like criminals. Don't get into the mindset that the bad guys look, act, or dress any certain way. The jail is full of average-looking men and women. Focus on a person's behavior, rather than their appearance.

Observation & Reporting

If a person's presence or behavior in a particular place and time cannot be logically explained, it's worth a second look and a phone call to dispatch so a Deputy can investigate the matter. TAKE NOTES! As shown in this case, it might prove to be a valuable bit of information later.

Stay alert, stay safe, and if you have any questions or concerns, please contact:

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