



*Office of Mayor Lawrence J. Morrissey  
LEADING BOLDLY, WORKING TOGETHER*

## **PRESS RELEASE**

---

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**CONTACT INFORMATION:**

**Kimberly Bruce  
Strategic Communications Manager**

---

**January 22, 2016**

**Phone: (779) 348-7331**

**E-mail: [Kimberly.Bruce@rockfordil.gov](mailto:Kimberly.Bruce@rockfordil.gov)**

### **Law Enforcement Partners Provide Update and Safety Advisory in Wake of Recent Robberies**

ROCKFORD, IL – The Rockford Police Department, joined by the Winnebago County Sheriff, Winnebago County State’s Attorney, Illinois State Police, FBI Safe Streets Task Force, and Loves Park Police Department, provided an update and advisory today regarding a rash of recent robberies. The partners also provided a basic advisory asking citizens to take extra precautions in being aware of their surroundings to ensure their personal safety as the law enforcement partners continue to investigate a recent rash of robberies throughout the community.

The Rockford Police Department has dedicated resources from their Detective Bureau, M3 Tactical Team, as well as extra patrol to respond to multiple related incidents. The Department is working with the Sheriff’s Department, State’s Attorney’s Office, FBI Task Force, Illinois State Police, and Loves Park Police Department, all of whom have offered additional patrol and investigative assistance.

"Based on our investigations, including victim statements, we are dealing with a handful of mostly juvenile suspects terrorizing our community. It is unacceptable and it will be stopped," said Interim Police Chief Patrick Hoey. "It is apparent that these suspects have friends and family who are aware of the behavior that is occurring and we strongly encourage those individuals to provide information to Rockford Police. We have called in additional staff on all shifts and are working around the clock to identify and apprehend these individuals."

Rockford Police have identified the suspects, described as a group of black males, ages 14-20. This group is most often committing criminal acts driving stolen vehicles, including a 1997 gold Toyota Camry, license S380716, with tinted rear windows and black rims, which was used in the majority of the recent robberies.

"The considerable challenge we face today is that the juvenile suspects in these current cases are mirroring a similar crime spree we experienced in the summer of 2015," added Rockford Mayor Morrissey. "We find that juveniles who have been arrested in the past seem to feel that they can act with impunity from the law. I am asking all of our partners in law enforcement, the court system, and the community to help us improve some of the specific challenges we face in juvenile justice. We can make arrests, but our police departments can't do it alone. We must have better solutions involving all criminal justice partners."

Illinois law limits the ability of court officials to incarcerate juvenile suspects. In 2015, the Winnebago County Sheriff stopped supporting the Juvenile Assessment Center in Winnebago County which led to the closure of that center. While the City of Rockford brings all juveniles arrested for felony offenses to the Winnebago County Jail or Juvenile Detention Center, many times those individuals must be released to their parents or guardians. Also, because of the State of Illinois budget impasse, funding for the Youth Services Network was diminished, causing them to cease a very successful program that targeted high risk juvenile offenders. "We are now seeing what happens to a community when vital juvenile crime reduction services are eliminated," Hoey stated.

#### **ADVISORY: TAKE EXTRA CARE AND DO NOT LEAVE RUNNING VEHICLES UNATTENDED**

The vast majority of the stolen vehicles have been taken while left running unattended.

"Historically, we see an uptick in stolen vehicles during the winter months when citizens more often 'warm up' their vehicles," said Hoey. "This crime of opportunity may unfortunately assist in the facilitation of violent criminal acts against your neighbor."

Early model Dodge and Chrysler vehicles are among the frequently targeted vehicles for theft due to the lack of installed anti-theft technology that is now common practice on all car models.

Rockford Police encourages citizens to reduce the likelihood of vehicle thefts by taking the following precautions to protect their vehicles:

- Never leave your running vehicle unattended.
- Always have keys to your vehicle on your person.
- Keep all vehicle doors and windows locked.
- Park in well-lit, populated areas (or in your home garage, if applicable).
- Remove or conceal from plain sight items of value including plug-in electronic devices (e.g., GPS, iPod, etc.).
- Utilize available anti-theft systems and devices (e.g., car alarm, horn, steering-wheel lock, electronic technology, etc.).

Citizens are also encouraged to walk with one or more people in well-lit areas and to not take any action that could jeopardize their personal safety or the safety of others if approached in a threatening situation.

Rockford Police encourages anyone with information regarding these crimes to contact the department at 815-966-2900 or call 911 to report suspicious activity.

###