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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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January 21, 2016

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ROCKFORD POLICE ISSUES SAFETY ADVISORY IN WAKE OF RECENT ROBBERIES

ROCKFORD, IL – The Rockford Police Department is advising citizens to be aware of their surroundings and practice common safety tips to help ensure their personal safety as it continues to investigate a recent rash of robberies throughout the community.

The department is working with the Sheriff's Department, FBI Task Force, Illinois State Police, and Loves Park Police Department, all of whom have offered additional patrol and investigative assistance.

“What we’re witnessing right now is a small group of juveniles 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 S38-0716, with tinted rear windows and black rims, which was used in the majority of the recent robberies.

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.

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