



Pasco Sheriff's Office

Public Information Office
8700 Citizen Drive
New Port Richey, Florida 34654
Phone (727) 844-7732
Fax: (727) 844-7738

For More Information, Contact:

Kevin Doll
Public Information Director
kdoll@pascosheriff.org

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TIPS targets auto burglaries

LAND O' LAKES – A Pasco Sheriff's Office auto burglary suppression task force that was formed in September has quickly produced impressive results.

During the month of September, auto burglaries in the Land O' Lakes and Wesley Chapel fell to 42 from the 151 that occurred during the month of August. This area is near multiple major highways that thieves often use to quickly move in and out of neighborhoods. To date, the team has made or assisted PSO detectives with over 93 arrests for 117 felonies and 43 misdemeanor offenses.

The task force, dubbed the Tactical Intelligence Policing Squad, or TIPS, is comprised of four road patrol deputies, one Property Crimes Unit detective, and one sergeant. Part of the team's success comes from forging partnerships with community groups and schools to identify crime patterns and target criminal groups active in these areas.

This proactive approach allows the team to quickly identify, locate, and arrest elusive and habitual offenders, thereby preventing their criminal activity from escalating. Since the task force is patrol-based, it also provides a rapid response to citizen generated tips, such as suspicious person and vehicle calls. These types of calls often lead to the identification and arrest of multiple burglars and ultimately clear several crimes in the area.

TIPS
2-2-2

An example occurred last month when an off-duty Pasco Sheriff's deputy was walking his dog and noticed a suspicious vehicle in the Grand Oaks Subdivision. The task force, along with patrol units, was able to quickly locate the vehicle and subsequently arrest the five occupants for auto burglaries in the subdivision. Through further investigation of this group, the team has learned of more than 50 other crimes they committed throughout East Pasco and Hillsborough County, including vehicle thefts, residential burglaries, and an arson. Additionally, a stolen checkbook, found in the suspects' vehicle, linked the group to three other subjects who were responsible for committing 17 auto burglaries in the Fox Ridge Subdivision.

This month, a similar tip from a resident in the Lexington Oaks Subdivision allowed the task force to capture two auto burglary suspects as they were leaving the subdivision. The suspects had traveled through several counties that night, committing burglaries in subdivisions along Interstate 75. Stolen property found in their vehicles has assisted with investigations in multiple jurisdictions.

Besides stolen vehicles, the team has recovered guns, computer game consoles, collectibles, GPS devices, radios, DVD players, and purses.

The team reminds citizens to follow simple prevention measures in protecting their valuables:

1. Lock your vehicle's doors at all times, even for short stops, since most auto burglaries involve unlocked doors;
2. Remove any valuables, such as purses and electronics, as thieves look for vehicles that have such items in plain view;
3. Contact the Pasco Sheriff's Office if you observe suspicious people or vehicles in your neighborhood. Try to obtain as much information about the subject(s), including a clothing description and vehicle make, including a license plate number.