

Rural Crime Advice from Crime Reduction Officer, Babergh & Mid Suffolk Districts – Verity Howell

The start of the New Year has already seen Suffolk Police facing some challenges. There has been a rise in the number of rural crimes across the west of the county, which include burglaries of both homes and outbuildings, and the theft of heating oil.

As such we want to issue the following timely advice to ensure you stay safe and protected. Suffolk Police continues to carry out the necessary patrols across the county and work towards ensuring we remain a safe place to live, work and visit as possible.

Rural Burglaries

It is very difficult to plan where an offender will target next, but the current properties being predominantly affected are isolated or secluded rural premises. Entry has been gained through insecure windows or doors or through force mainly at the rear of the property and are being committed mainly during day light hours.

Outbuildings and Farm Burglaries

Power tools, ride on mowers, quad bikes, trailers and catalytic converters have all been easy targets for an opportunistic thief and as such we are urging everyone to remain vigilant and lock items away in a secure location at all times.

Heating Oil Theft

This crime is on the rise whereby an offender, usually during night hours, syphons off a large quantity, if not all, of the oil within home oil tanks, and occasionally from diesel tanks as well.

A few simple steps can help keep your property safe while deterring thieves;

- Install lighting in areas that will assist you, or passers-by, in identifying any criminal activity. Please remember that where a property is very rural or isolated lighting will only assist an offender to find what they are after.
- Use closed shackle padlocks on outbuilding doors and oil tanks.
- Fit additional locks to up-and-over garage doors or install a 'garage defender'.
- Consider an alarm; either a battery operated alarm or upgrade an existing house alarm to include any outbuildings. And make sure you use it when you are not in the premise, even if you are going out for a few minutes.
- Security-mark property and advertise the fact that they are marked with signs or window stickers. Keep a note of serial and engine, make and model numbers and take photos of items for insurance purposes. They also help the police trace items should they be lost or stolen.
- Ensure that bicycles, power tools, quad bikes and ride on mowers have additional security devices to secure them inside an outbuilding such as the use of a security chain and ground anchor.
- Register items for **free** on www.immobilise.com a secure property database all UK Police forces use to identify lost and stolen property.
- Ask your neighbours to keep an eye on your property - and do the same for them, particularly when you are away.
- If you consider using additional security items such as garage defenders, chains, anchors and padlocks look at Sold Secure products which are police approved. Further information can be found at www.soldsecure.com.

Suffolk Police sell a number of security products at cost price at Sudbury, Hadleigh, Capel, Stowmarket, Elmswell, Needham Market and Eye Police Stations as follows; Outbuilding alarms (battery operated) £8 to £10; 24 hour segment timer switches £3; alarmed padlocks £10; property marking pens £1 and personal attack alarms for £3. Please call your local SNT Officer, or Crime Reduction officer, on 101 for further information and advice.

Remember if you see any persons or vehicles that look suspicious or out of place please record the location and time you see them, a description including the registration number of the vehicle, and telephone the police on 101, or 999 if an offence is occurring there and then.