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Construction site burglaries up

By Sora O'Doherty



A burglary suspect at this Orinda residential construction site is caught on camera. Photos provided

its building site. The photo was turned over to Orinda police, but no arrest has been made.

In recent weeks, the Orinda Police Department has received reports of theft at construction sites.

According to Orinda Police Chief Mark Nagel, the thefts primarily occur at single-family construction sites and the theft of property is from the area immediately surrounding the site. Items such as machinery, equipment, appliances, furnishings and material supplies are desirable given their high dollar value. Typically, most contractors are insured for loss, but those costs are increasing.

One company operating in Orinda, Bayview Builders, confirmed that they have been hit twice. The first time over \$10,000 worth of equipment and tools were stolen from a locked construction site storage box. The thieves cut it open, apparently with some sort of torch. The second time, approximately \$1,500 worth of electrical plugs, switches and related items were taken. As a result, Bayview set up a security camera and captured photos of a suspected thief carrying away material from

According to Nagel, residential construction sites are difficult for police to monitor as the locations are typically spread throughout the city and most locations are not fenced. If there is some fencing material, it's usually secured by a padlock or another device that can be easily defeated. Nagel offered some tips to locations currently under construction or remodel to prevent thefts from occurring and also identify property in the event of theft.

He suggests that all assets on a construction site be identified, such as by engraving a driver's license number on the equipment itself and monitoring it as closely as possible. He also suggests locking gates when not in use, securing tools and equipment, and adding lighting and security cameras, which should be placed in a location that will capture entry and exit of the construction site by persons or vehicles.

Thefts and burglaries are often crimes of opportunity and are often repeat offenses, Nagel says. A successful theft of construction equipment and building supplies often leads to repeated thefts from location to location.

Nagel advised that if you see unfamiliar people in the area without an obvious purpose for being at, on or near the construction site, you should call the OPD at (925) 646-2441.



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