



Hernando County Sheriff's Office

A STATE ACCREDITED LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY

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Media Release

From: Corporal Wendy McGinnis
Public Information Officer, 352-754-6830

Re: Increase in Air Conditioner Thefts Results in an Increase in Patrols

Date: January 6, 2012

Since November 30, 2011, sixteen businesses throughout Hernando County have experienced a theft, or an attempted theft, of their air conditioner compressors and/or copper tubing. When the price of copper and other metals go up, the demand to obtain metals obviously causes an increase in metal-related thefts, which include air conditioning units. The [U.S. Department of Energy](#) (DOE) estimates that metal theft costs U.S. businesses around \$1 billion a year.

Following are some tips from www.consumerreports.org titled *For victims of air conditioner thefts, it's an endless summer*:

Install an air conditioner cage. Air conditioner cages are anchored to the ground to stop thieves from stealing the cage and the unit inside. They should be welded and not bolted together and have a non-corrosive finish.

Install a fence. You can also box the unit in with a chain link fence that you can padlock. Make sure you leave enough space around the unit for it to be serviced.

Install an alarm. These alarms are attached to the working parts of the unit, so if it is taken apart, the alarm will sound. They are usually installed by a professional who will place the control box indoors and out of harm's way.

Get a watch dog. A barking dog is a pretty good deterrent. If you aren't a dog lover or can't afford the costs, the HVAC Guide suggests trying a "Beware of the Dog" sign.

Add lighting. Floodlights and motion-sensitive lights placed near the AC unit will surprise the intruder, as well as alert the homeowner.

Be a good neighbor. Ask your neighbors to keep an eye on your home and do the same for them. Being neighborly can help protect a lot more than your air conditioner.

In addition to these tips, home and business owners can also install a surveillance camera, which adds deterrence for would-be thieves.

Detective Scott Lamia and Detective Wayne Peterson are both actively working the recent air condition thefts. They are asking anyone with suspect information to contact them at 352-754-6830. If anyone wishes to remain anonymous or to be eligible for a reward, they are encouraged to call the Hernando County Crime Stoppers toll-free number 1-866-990-8477 or you may email your tip by clicking <http://www.hernadosheriff.org/Tips/> *You may be eligible for a reward up to \$1,000.*

“It is a shame any time our citizens are preyed upon by thieves, but it is even more painful when they target those that serve our citizens like our churches and veteran groups,” said Lieutenant Harold Hutchinson. “The cost associated to the victims in repairing the damage caused by the thefts is rising greatly and far exceeds what the criminals are gaining when cashing in on the recyclable materials. The Sheriff’s Office takes all crime against our citizens seriously, and we are working diligently to combat the A/C theft problems we are experiencing.”