



VERNON HILLS POLICE DEPARTMENT

To the citizens who live, work, and visit the community of Vernon Hills:

On behalf of the men and women of the Vernon Hills Police Department, I would like to wish everyone a safe and Happy New Year!

At the beginning of each New Year, members of the police department conduct a review of the previous year's activity to determine any trends, and to assess the overall effectiveness of police operations. Included in this assessment is a review of patrol operations, crime prevention activities, the success of our investigations, arrest summaries, and surveys assessing confidence in the community. And we always try to improve our ability to communicate information to you, the residents.

Overall, crime in Vernon Hills was slightly lower in 2011 than it was in 2010. Serious crimes (Part I crimes: robberies, batteries, burglaries, thefts, etc.) went down 7%. Unfortunately, less serious crimes (Part II crimes: assaults, criminal damage, vandalism, disorderly conduct, etc.) increased by 3.3%.

On closer examination, there are some interesting things to note. The harsh economy seems to be catching up with us: Deceptive Practice reports were up 28%. Deceptive Practice is a Part II crime where someone uses fraudulent means to obtain goods, services or money; this includes using someone else's identification or writing a check on a fake account. This alone is a good reason to look closer at our own personal information security measures and re-evaluate how effective it is.

Although Burglary to Motor Vehicles went down 27%, it can be reduced even further with a few simple reminders:

- Always lock your vehicle. An estimated one-third of the Burglary to Motor Vehicles that happened in Vernon Hills in 2011 were from *unlocked* vehicles.
- Most of the victims left valuable items in plain view. Laptops, GPS units, iPods, radar detectors, even purses left out are an invitation to thieves - and they aren't afraid to break a window to get to them. Purses were the most popular item stolen last year - criminals would steal the purses/wallets/bags and then use the credit cards (Deceptive Practice).

General Theft can also be reduced. Don't leave your property unattended! An estimated 40% of the Theft reports we took involved property that was not secured or attended (cell phones, iPods, purses, jewelry, bikes left unlocked, etc.). Be sure to lock up your property whenever you are not able to watch it.

Some other items we would like everyone to be aware of are:

New Laws

Every year, there are many new laws that become effective on January 1. This year, we feel the most important new law is the mandatory requirement of every occupant in a car to wear a seatbelt. Safety is the number one concern and seatbelt use has been determined to lower the risk of injury in a traffic crash.

Older, but Still Important

In 2011, the law was changed regarding use of cell phones in school zones and construction zones, *making it illegal to use a handset* in these areas.

Ruse Burglaries

2011 saw a dramatic increase in the number of Ruse Burglaries in Lake County. In this type of crime, the offender may pose as a public utility employee, a roofer, or other service provider and claim they need access to the victim's (usually elderly) residence or back yard to inspect their water, gas or cable components, recent work done, etc. The offender will then direct the victim to an area of the residence away from where valuables may be stored, or to come outside of their residence to look at something in their yard while their home is entered by others and burglarized.

In many of the reported cases, the suspects are described as male Hispanic(s), but other cases involve female suspects (and nationality is not always easy to determine). Most of the suspects have communicated via cell phones or two-way radios.

Please, do not allow strangers to come into your home or to distract you away from your unlocked front door. Call the police immediately and try to provide a description of the suspect(s) and a vehicle. But most importantly, remain safe! Be sure to pass this information along to any elderly people you may know.

Traffic

Traffic issues continue to be a major concern to us here in Vernon Hills. We will continue to conduct special details in reported problem areas and study the data collected to make improvements whenever we can. We also utilize such technology as Stealth Stat and using Speed Studies. We will continue to strictly enforce all traffic laws and ordinances.

For Vernon Hills Residents - Neighborhood Watch Programs

In 2012, we would like to get reacquainted with our Neighborhood Watch groups. As time goes on, members of the groups may move or change their contact information - and forget to tell us. If you are a member of an active Neighborhood Watch program, and would like to provide us with updated information, please contact our Crime Prevention Unit at 847-247-4889. Any resident interested in finding out more about Neighborhood Watch are also invited to call.

During 2012, members of the police department are going to try to reduce crime in every category. But we need your help. Report suspicious activity, no matter how small it seems. Many crimes have been foiled due to observant witnesses.

We are also going to try to improve the methods in which we communicate information. We encourage you to:

- Visit the police department website at www.VHPD.com
- Visit the Village website at www.vernonhills.org
- Sign up for broadcast email (link also accessible from the Village website) and have Village news and important information e-mailed to you.
- Sign up for Blackboard services. This service will send you a voicemail, text or e-mail when an incident happens that affects your neighborhood or business area in Vernon Hills. Sign up can be done on the Village's website.

Once again, from all of us here at the Vernon Hills Police Department, we want to wish you a great New Year, and a crime-free 2012! Should you ever want to contact me or a member of my staff, or speak with a police officer, contact the Vernon Hills Police Department at 847-362-4449 or visit us at 740 Lakeview Parkway, Vernon Hills.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Fleischhauer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "M".

Mark Fleischhauer, Chief of Police