

Burglar strikes Grand Island homes while residents sleep

By Carol Bryant

The Independent

Police are seeking Crime Stoppers tips to catch a "while you were sleeping" burglar responsible for at least 18 break-ins throughout Grand Island in the last three months.

"What makes these unique is that the victims have all been home when they've occurred," said police Sgt. Pete Kortum. "The doors are unlocked. There's no force being used."

The crimes aren't focused on any one area, he said. "They're literally all over town."

Kortum said taking one precaution could prevent the burglaries.

"I think they can prevent these by locking their doors."

Items stolen include jewelry, a camera, a garage door opener, purses, cash, televisions, a scanner and a phone receiver.

"It's not limited to purses and wallets like we have normally experienced on this type of residential burglary," Kortum said.

The incidents have occurred after 10 p.m. when people are asleep. Some have awakened and seen the burglar between 11 p.m. and 4 a.m. Victims have observed the intruder in at least four of the incidents, and police are concerned about him confronting victims.

"You have a chance for a violent confrontation and injury to someone," he said. "That kind of burglary is worrisome."

The burglar is described as a white or Hispanic male, 5-foot-7 to 5-foot-11, with longer dark hair.

"The descriptions are such a wide range," he said. "When the intruder has been seen, he has bolted out the door and taken off."

The 67 burglaries reported in Grand Island last month was double the amount investigated in July 1994, Kortum said.

In all of 1994, Grand Island police investigated 359 burglaries. This year the pace has picked up with 275 burglaries reported in just seven months, he said.

Anyone with information about the burglaries is asked to call Grand Island/Hall County Crime Stoppers at 381-8822. Callers may remain anonymous. Crime Stoppers may pay a reward of up to \$1,000.