Spring is here, and so are the stolen property reports

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Spring has arrived, and so has an influx of stolen property reports.

Caddo Sheriff Steve Prator said the Sheriff's Office traditionally gets more reports of stolen outdoor lawn equipment in the spring and summer months, and in few of those cases, will the property owner have identifying records of ownership that could help return their property if found.

"No one ever thinks they will become a victim of crime, so sometimes we don't do the things necessary to protect ourselves and our property," Prator said. "Something as small as engraving an ID number on your lawn edger can save you time and money down the road and could even deter a thief from taking your property."

The Sheriff's Office commonly sees a rise in property thefts when people leave doors and windows open and lawn or sporting equipment unattended.

To help Caddo Parish residents protect their property the Sheriff?s Office offers Operation Identification, a crime prevention program that discourages burglary by marking valuables with personal identification numbers.

To participate in Operation Identification, borrow an electronic engraving pencil from any sheriff's office substation in Oil City, Keithville or Shreveport, or the sheriff's Community Programs Office at the Caddo Courthouse. Mark your valuables in a permanently affixed place using your LA driver's license number. Be sure to include your state's abbreviation. For example: LA123456.

When all of your property has been marked, compile an itemized list of your valuables on a brochure obtained from the sheriff's office. Keep the list with your important papers. When you return the engraver, you'll receive two window decals to display at your home, warning criminals that you participate in Operation Identification.

"Permanently marked property is more difficult for burglars to dispose of. It reduces the resale value," Prator said. "If a thief knows the property in your home has been marked, it's unlikely he'll select you as a target."

Prator also offers these suggestions for protecting your property from theft:
? Secure all lawn equipment in a locked shed or garage when not in use. Never leave it unattended or in plain view, even if you?re just going inside for a break. ? Avoid leaving valuables in an unlocked vehicle or one where the windows are rolled down. ? Whenever you go outside, lock the doors and windows and take the key with you, even if you?re just going next door or mowing the yard. ? Trim back trees and shrubs from doors and windows. ? Videotape the contents of your home, storage shed and garage.