



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Incident Type: Theft/Fraud
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Police Department INVESTIGATIONS DIVISION

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ALERT: THE FELONY LANE GANG IS OPERATING IN CENTRAL INDIANA

The moniker "Felony Lane Gang" (FLG) was coined by the banking industry. It is a name they gave a group, or more specifically a type of activity where the suspects drive through the lane farthest from the teller while perpetrating fraud. This is largely so the teller will have more difficulty in identifying the suspect. FLG is not a gang, but rather an organized network of criminals throughout the United States. The group originates in the Fort Lauderdale area. In most cases, a "handler" or group leader recruits drug addicts, prostitutes, or the homeless. They rent cars, then travel as a group throughout the United States breaking into vehicles. Suspects will conduct surveillance of the lot, then target females that leave purses inside of their vehicles. Once observed the suspects gain entry into the vehicle (often times by breaking the window) and take the purse. The suspects then employ the recruited individuals to cash stolen checks, make fraudulent purchases with credit cards, and commit identity fraud; this often happens within hours after the initial theft. The suspects will use wigs and other adornments to make themselves look more like the victim (as they appear in their driver's license photograph) while perpetrating these crimes.

Since 2010, the Westfield area has experienced more than 65 FLG related incidents that have resulted in tens of thousands of dollars in property and financial loss; these vehicle break-ins took place at local fitness centers, daycares, and sports complexes. As a result of subsequent criminal investigations, the Westfield Police Department has arrested and/or filed criminal charges against 10 individuals in association with these incidents (in many cases each individual was responsible for multiple incidences).

Westfield also has experienced thefts from unlocked vehicles. During these thefts, the perpetrator(s) typically target unlocked vehicles where valuables are visible from the outside and/or easily located inside the vehicle. These individuals often enter unlocked vehicles that contain valuables in plain view but they will also break windows to gain entry. These incidents typically occur during the overnight hours and are not reported until the next morning when the owner recognizes

property missing or out of place. The items most commonly taken from vehicles are global positioning systems (Garmin, Magellan, Tom-tom), radar detectors, cash (coins), prescription medications, and firearms.

Although the Westfield Police Department does and will continue to proactively address the local FLG problem with plain clothes surveillance and the vigorous investigation of reported incidents, we also ask the public to take the following precautions steps to prevent these crimes:

1. Do not leave purses or valuable personal property (firearms, prescription medicine, electronics, handbags, wallets, etc...) inside of parked vehicles.
2. If you do have valuables or recent purchases in your vehicle, and cannot take them with you, do not leave them in plain view. Store them in the trunk or out of public sight.
 - a. Do not leave purses in your vehicle, even in your trunk. The perpetrators of these crimes have been known to watch as a purse is put into the trunk, wait until the victim leaves, and then break the window and open the trunk.
3. Always lock your vehicle, whether it is parked in a garage or in your driveway or at a business.
4. Never leave your car unoccupied with the motor running.
5. When at home, park your vehicles in a locked garage, if possible. If you can't park in a garage, park in a well-lit area.
6. Leave your home's exterior lights on.
7. When parking, check that all doors and your trunk are locked and that you have your keys with you.
8. If possible, get an alarm installed. Alarms can deter thieves not only from stealing items out of your vehicle, but from stealing your vehicle as well.
9. Be prepared for the worst. Sometimes, even with all the preparation, a theft can still happen. It is a good idea to have an inventory of all your important items; list all serial numbers, take pictures for insurance purposes, and have copies of your cards and IDs. It never hurts to be prepared.
10. Pay attention to your surroundings when parking or parked. If you see multiple individuals sitting inside of a parked vehicle for longer than would be appropriate at that location, or individuals looking in vehicle windows, contact police immediately at 911 or 317-773-1300 (not the business management or a representative). In short, report suspicious activity to police.
11. Report any incident where you believe someone has entered your vehicle without permission (i.e. glove box left open or items strewn about the vehicle). Report this immediately!

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12. If you are the victim of a theft from your vehicle:
 - a. Report the incident to police immediately
 - b. Contact your bank and shut off any stolen credit/debit cards
 - c. Place a fraud alert on the accounts through your bank
 - d. Monitor the card statements for any fraudulent transactions made immediately following the theft and report those to the police upon discovery
 - e. Monitor your credit report for at least 6 months to detect any fraudulent credit account activity (new accounts, etc...); contact police upon discovery
13. Set up alerts through your bank that immediately notify you when threshold transactions are made (i.e. receive an email anytime a purchase for more than \$100.00 is made using your card).

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