

HIGHWOOD POLICE DEPARTMENT



CRIME PREVENTION



**17 HIGHWOOD AVE.
HIGHWOOD, IL 60040
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Home Repair Fraud

On a daily basis con artists posing as contractors, repairmen, and utility workers commit crimes of theft, burglary, and home repair fraud on countless people, especially the senior citizens. Losses are in the millions of dollars annually. The suspects who commit these crimes are usually career criminals specializing in this kind of activity. They target the seniors due to the fact that they usually keep cash in their homes, they are retired or unemployed, and are at home during the day.

The suspects cruise residential neighborhoods looking for elderly persons outside their home. Once they find someone, they approach the person and offer to do some sort of home repair work (tree trimming, roof work, driveway seal coating, or chimney repairs). They quote a low price or a very high one depending on the persons mental state. If work is actually done and a low price was quoted, they say the job was more difficult and request more money due to additional materials and time.

Things to look for:

- Pick up trucks or full size vans with ladders or ladder racks, or a spraying device mounted in the truck bed for driveway seal coating.
- The trucks usually do not have license plates on them, or they will have a temporary license on it.
- The suspects usually work in groups of three to six males.
- They will try and distract you outside in the back yard so another suspect can gain entry to the house and steal your valuables.

- The suspects claim that they are utility workers, city employees, or cable TV contractors. They say they have to get inside to check a potential problem like water pressure, fuses, wires, pipes, etc. Usually, they try to lure the homeowner to the basement to keep them from seeing what is going on in the rest of the house.
- The suspects may wear hard hats, orange safety vests, and carry “walkie talkies”.
- The suspects then look for cash and jewelry upstairs. If they have trouble finding your hiding place, they may ask for change for a large bill to see where you keep your money.

Prevention Measures:

- Never allow yourself to be lured outside by a contractor or solicitor that you did not call. If you must go outside with the contractor, lock your house with a deadbolt lock.
- All contractors or City of Highwood employees should have a photo ID with them. Ask to see it.
- Call the City of Highwood at 847-432-1924 and ask if work is being done in your area. Do not allow someone in to your home until you see a photo ID or verify the company they work for.
- Get copies of all repair work to be done in writing, and get more than one estimate.
- If you suspect something is wrong, call the Police Department at 847-604-8992, and ask for an officer to come over. It is never a bother for an officer to come to your home and make sure you are safe.