

SUMMER HEAT MAKES AIR CONDITIONERS TARGET FOR THEFT

Soaring summer temperatures have put health and safety at risk for thousands of elderly who lack adequate cooling systems in their homes. Those who do have air conditioners, especially window units, are in danger of having them stolen, too.

The Visiting Nurse Association has been providing needed air conditioners at no cost to its Meals on Wheels clients, as well as home care and hospice patients thanks to generous community support. Liz Roberts, VNA's director of long-term care administration, oversees air conditioner distribution for the organization and has tips on how to reduce theft of the units:

- Install the air conditioner in a window at the front of the house, if possible, where visibility by neighbors can be a deterrent to theft. Or install the unit in a window that's enclosed within a fenced yard where a dog is present. This may require changing sleeping the location in the house, but it's usually worth it to help prevent the air conditioner from being stolen.
- Make it difficult to steal an air conditioner by planting rose bushes or other thorny plants in front of the window unit.
- Turn on exterior lights near the air conditioner to keep it well lit. Thieves avoid lighted areas.
- Have an air conditioner alarm installed that is activated if the power supply cord or refrigerant line is cut.
- If unable to get an alarm, put a sticker on the air conditioner anyway warning that an alarm will sound if the unit is moved. Post signs near the air conditioner warning "Beware of Dog" or "House Under Surveillance." This may deter thieves who don't want to risk it.

"These recommendations are especially important during this year's record-breaking high temperatures," advises Ms. Roberts. "Taking a few safeguards is key to curbing theft of home air conditioners," she adds. To make a donation to VNA's air conditioner fund, call 214-689-2936.

Air conditioner thefts have risen with the record-breaking high temperatures this summer.

