***Media Relations Information for 10/14/2011***

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**La Porte Police seek community’s help in battling air conditioning unit thefts**

As with many communities throughout Harris County, the City of La Porte has experienced a significant increase in theft cases involving copper wiring and air conditioning units.  According to La Porte Police Detectives, most thefts of this nature have taken place on the east side of La Porte.  Because of this trend, police patrols have been increased in the affected areas and investigators are asking residents to keep an eye out for, and immediately report, suspicious persons lurking around unoccupied residences or businesses after hours.

While there have been a few incidents of air conditioner theft in other portions of the community, the primary area of concern for La Porte Police remains east of S.H. 146.  In addition to unattended residences and closed businesses, other areas most-commonly targeted have included rental properties and vacant homes for sale.  Typically, when an act of air conditioner theft occurs, a lone suspect has already been walking or driving around the area to research accessibility to AC units. Then, after a site is selected, thieves arrive in groups of two or three, whereupon the entire unit is generally disconnected and loaded into a truck bed.

Stolen AC units are later dismantled at another location, and then various parts and precious metals, such as copper and aluminum, are sold to area scrap yards for profit.   Unfortunately, many parts do not have serial numbers and those that do are infrequently recorded by owners after installation. Because of this fact, LPPD Detectives recommend, if you haven’t already done so, now is an ideal time to log the make, model, and serial number of all components related to your exterior air conditioning unit.  Such proactive measures will help investigators in the recovery of your property should it be stolen.

To report suspicious activity, or if you have any information regarding possible suspects involved in local air conditioning thefts, please contact the La Porte Police Department at 281-471-2141.  In addition, if you have any information which may help solve a crime of this nature, you are encouraged to call Crime Stoppers of Houston at 713-222-TIPS (8477) or log onto their website at www.crime-stoppers.org.  If your tip leads to an arrest or the filing of felony charges in any case, you will be eligible for a cash reward of up to $5000. All calls and web-based entries submitted to Crime Stoppers will remain anonymous. The La Porte Police Department thanks you for your assistance in keeping our community safe.