

THEFT OF DOMESTIC HEATING OIL IN NETHERHAMPTON

Dear Neighbours

Please excuse the omnibus address. Pete Jung has kindly offered to send this message on his standard distribution list in order to reach as many of you as possible.

Moira and I recently returned from holiday to discover that we had lost nearly a full tank of domestic heating oil, about 2000 litres. We reported the loss via 101 and received a visit from Pete Jung. We also informed immediate neighbours. They had not observed anything which could assist the culprit(s) to be identified. This type of theft is most commonly carried out by deploying a hose from the back of a van and using a small mobile pump to transfer oil into drums inside the van parked in the road. If disturbed by the occupant, the thieves can cut the hose and make off in the van.

Our thoughts have turned to preventing a recurrence of the incident. We would like to share with you the following measures which were gleaned with the advice of Wiltshire Police and our friendly oil delivery driver. Incidentally, he and his colleagues are drilled to watch their rear view mirror for any sign of a vehicle following to observe the deliveries.

The most practicable preventive and mitigatory measures for domestic premises appear to be:

1. Having gate or fence to prevent unwelcomed access to the oil tank.
2. Bright security lights triggered by motion detectors covering approaches to the tank, preferably placed out of easy reach. Talk to your neighbour before installing and when setting up.
3. A sensor inside the tank which will sound an audible alarm if there is a sudden drop in oil level or removal of the filler cap.
4. If the tank does not have a sensor, checking your oil consumption regularly to detect any sudden unaccountable loss.
5. Promptly reporting door knockers and vehicles and pedestrians who use the road through the village who appear suspicious. Wiltshire Police are quite happy to follow up reports which, to be helpful, should include vehicle make, registration number, time and other factual information.
6. Letting neighbours know when you plan to be away from the home.
7. Order part loads of oil rather than full loads, but make sure you monitor consumption.
8. Check your household insurance policy to confirm that oil theft is covered.

We received mixed advice on CCTV cameras for domestic premises. They may act as a deterrent. However, a hood or similar head gear will allow thieves to carry out the crime without revealing their identity. Also, only the more expensive CCTV systems include infra red imaging sensors which will work at night.

There are two schools of thought on locking oil tank filler caps. It certainly creates a barrier and deterrent. However, thieves can drill or cut a hole in a tank which then would require the home owner to replace the tank as well as the lost oil.

Apparently, the recent drop in oil prices has seen a significant reduction in this type of crime. So please do not let this note engender undue concern. Hopefully, the above information may be helpful to you.

Our best wishes to you all.

Douglas and Moira Coleman

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