



MEDIA RELEASE

Cottage Grove Police Department
and
Hastings Police Department



June 20, 2011

Suspect Arrested in Cottage Grove and Hastings Area Home Burglaries

Early this morning, investigators from the Cottage Grove and Hastings Police Departments arrested Sean Michael Ancel, age 33, of Hastings on the probable cause charge of First Degree Burglary. Ancel was arrested without incident and has since been booked into the Washington County Jail awaiting formal charges. Ancel is suspected of burglarizing occupied homes in Hastings and Cottage Grove and faces possible charges in both Dakota and Washington Counties. Investigators are working with several other law enforcement agencies in an effort to determine if Ancel was involved in other unsolved burglaries.

In the current cases, Ancel is suspected of entering occupied residences through open or unlocked garage doors. Once inside the garage, it is believed, Ancel would enter the victim's home to steal wallets and/or purses. Investigators believe Ancel would then commit a secondary round of crimes by using or attempting to use victim's stolen credit cards.

Over the past several weeks, as investigators began to focus on Ancel as a possible suspect, police worked to minimize risk by reminding residents to close and lock garage doors. In some cases, officers made contact with residents to ask them to secure open garage doors.

"Investigators from Hastings, Cottage Grove, and Dakota and Washington Counties spent many hours tracking and conducting surveillance on the suspect to connect him to the crimes and develop strong evidence to support the case," said Hastings Police Chief Paul Schnell. "This suspect entered people's homes as they slept, which is very brazen and dangerous," he added.

"Even while the arrest of this one suspect will immediately enhance the safety of the entire area, residents are reminded of the importance of taking all steps to reduce the likelihood of becoming a victim," said Cottage Grove Public Safety Director Craig Woolery.

Tips for reducing risk of having your home burglarized include:

- Close and lock overhead and side garage doors, even while home.
- Lock the interior door between the garage and home.
- Lock and secure first floor windows and patio doors.
- Install motion detection lights outside your home
- Lock vehicle doors parked in driveways.
- Do not leave valuables (purses, briefcases, MP3 players, cell phone, etc.) in your vehicle.
- Report all suspicious activity.