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Orinda Police investigate carjacking/robbery

By Sora O'Doherty

A woman was forced out of her car in the first block of Moraga Way at approximately 7:51 p.m. Dec. 14 by three suspects who attempted to steal her Mazda 3, according to an Orinda Police report. OPD officers spoke to a woman who said she was approached by three suspects as she entered her car. One suspect took her phone and keys and forced her out of the car. However, the suspects failed to get far; after entering the car, they drove a short distance, but were unable to release the parking brake. Abandoning the vehicle, the suspects fled on foot.

Orinda police, assisted by officers from Moraga, Lafayette and Danville, searched for the suspects, but they were not located and the suspects are still outstanding. According to Orinda Police Chief David Cook, the incident is still being actively investigated and police are checking area cameras for evidence. Anyone with any information on this incident is asked to contact Sergeant S. Valkanoff of the Orinda Police Department at (925) 253-4217. For any tips, please email: Orindatip@cityoforinda.org or call 866-846-3592 to leave an anonymous voice message.

The chief has also reported another incident being actively investigated that occurred Dec. 9 on Camino Del Monte. In that incident, a victim confronted thieves who stole the license plates from her vehicle, and the suspect pushed the victim and escaped.

Cook noted that this case is a robbery instead of a petty theft because the suspect used force by pushing the victim in order to commit the crime. "While we certainly understand the desire to step in to protect ourselves or others from being a victim, because of the unpredictability of suspect behavior and the potential for a violent reaction," Cook said, "we strongly recommend our community members do not attempt to interact with people committing crimes." Rather, he suggested being an excellent witness by paying particular attention to the description of the suspect(s) and their gender, race, clothing, hair color/style, eye color, and vehicle. The chief recommended that victims call 911 immediately so officers can start to canvas the area and hopefully make an immediate arrest, as happened in a recent theft case from the El Toyonal neighborhood. He also recommended that people obtain video or photographs if they can do so safely.

Cook noted that there has been an uptick in car thefts recently in Orinda, particularly targeting Audis. "Unfortunately," he added, "we are also still seeing thefts of vehicles where the keys are left in a car parked at a residence." He urged residents to help protect against theft by not leaving valuable items in vehicles and ensure that cars are locked whether at home or out and about.

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