



PHOTOS BY RICARDO RAMÍREZ BUXEDA/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Under a special black light, the chemical residue of the SmartWater solution can be seen on stolen items or even on a person. On Thursday, the Winter Park Police Department paired with SmartWater CSI to help fight theft in the city.

Police use ‘water’ to keep thieves at bay

BY DESIREE STENNETT
Staff Writer

Winter Park police trotted out the latest crime-fighting tool Thursday: a vial of high-tech liquid designed to invisibly mark property so it later can be identified if stolen.

Police Chief Brett C. Railey said the product would thwart would-be thieves who target valuables inside homes and businesses.

The Winter Park Police Department paired with SmartWater CSI, a British forensics company that recently established an American presence in South Florida.

The company has a 17-year track record working in the United Kingdom and has used its water-based solution, which is fortified with 26 different elements,



SmartWater CSI President Logan Pierson demonstrates his product during a news conference Thursday.

as a tactic to prevent burglary or assist with a conviction after a thief has already stolen valuables.

Winter Park is the first city to use the technology in Central Florida.

Here's how it works: Po-

lice want the city's residents and business owners to sign up for a free safety survey to identify weaknesses that may make their property a target for potential burglars.

Once the survey is complete, officials will help pro-

vide a free 10-milliliter vial of the product — enough to swab up to 60 items, with a unique chemical code that is only visible under a special black light.

SmartWater users have to register their vials. But if they're ever a victim of burglary, cops can scan the codes and identify the owner of the items.

The liquid is safe for everything from electronics to jewelry and other pricey metals that thieves flock to. It dries quickly, is invisible to the eye, and can't be removed with heat, sunlight or even acid, company President Logan Pierson said. After the SmartWater dries, the elements left behind are invisible to the naked eye and are what can help police track the stolen items.

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Police already have handed out 21 vials and have 130 more ready for distribution. The city has invested about \$5,000 of money seized from drug dealers and other criminals to roll out the technology.

If demand exceeds the current supply, Railey said, the Police Department is ready to spend more of the seized money to provide more vials.

Other products are also

available to protect commercial properties, including a misting system designed to spray intruders with SmartWater.

The Orlando Police Department introduced a similar product — CopDots — last year.

It was not clear Thursday whether any property had been recovered because of CopDots.

Orlando residents can buy CopDots at Lowe's stores for \$29.98.

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