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Tuesday, Jan 29 2013 12:02 AM

[Watch out for the 'broken window syndrome'](#)

By Sgt. Michael Grant, Guest Columnist

The front lawn has become a parking lot. Cars, boats, trailers, RVs collecting trash and weeds under and around them. Miscellaneous junk piled up next to the home or on the property. The home is in desperate need of paint. The Christmas lights are up all year for all to enjoy. Children's bikes, scooters, skateboards left on the driveway for a few fun weeks. The broken window left unfixed.

The broken window syndrome was introduced in 1982 by social scientists James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling. Essentially, the theory suggests that if a broken window is not fixed, then the damage or vandalism becomes the social norm.

"Individuals are forced to look for other clues -- called signals -- as to what the social norms allow them to do and how great is the risk of getting caught violating those norms. An ordered and clean environment sends the signal that this is a place which is monitored and people here conform to the common norms of non-criminal behavior; a disordered environment which is littered, vandalized, and not maintained sends the opposite signal,"

the scientists wrote.

I'm sure that many of you reading this have seen just this sort of thing taking place. You take good care of your property, try to maintain a semblance of cleanliness, and next door to you they could care less what happens to their home. This type of lifestyle is contagious. I have seen it in many neighborhoods throughout California. Something as simple as someone placing a sticker on our stop signs becomes an epidemic and drags down the appearance and feeling of an entire community.

I have worked in many communities and have seen first hand the Broken Window Syndrome in action. To me it is no theory, but fact. It is a fact that if a sticker ends up on a street sign, there will be more to follow. It is a fact that if a house has vehicles and trash around it, others homes will began to have the same. It is a fact that if a criminal feels comfortable operating in an area, other criminals will began to operate in the area as well.

It is a fact that if some or all these things occur, people that find trashed homes, vandalism, and loud noises socially acceptable, will feel comfortable living in your neighborhood.

Each of us must do our part to maintain a standard of what is socially acceptable or we will all pay the price in higher crime, lower property values and a diminished quality of life. After all, that is really what I'm talking about, your quality of life. Just like the dogs barking all night, it's the little things that nickel and dime us.

The Stallion Springs Police Department is truly dedicated to maintaining a high quality of life in Stallion Springs. This isn't lip service or a hollow promise. We pride ourselves on responding quickly to these types of issues, but cannot accomplish this mission alone. We rely on Stallion Springs residents to let us know when quality of life issues are taking place. Please report barking dogs, vandalism, stickers on signs or trashed properties to us as soon as possible.

Tips can be left anonymously for the Stallion Springs Police Department by visiting us on the web at www.mysscsd.com, then click on the "Public Safety" link, and follow it to "PD Contact." Leave us an email describing your concerns and the location in question. As always, you will hear back from us, and we will let you know how the investigation is going.

MICHAEL GRANT is a sergeant with the Stallion Springs Police Dept.

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MORE WIND
Supervisors rescind wind zoning

Kern County supervisors eliminated old wind-energy zoning on land near Sand Canyon north of Tehachapi Tuesday. And in doing so, they got support from a number of the biggest critics of the area's wind energy development.

Wind Museum holds ribbon cutting

Pilkington released from duties as Bear Valley chief

Bear Valley Police Chief Joe Pilkington was released from his duties on Friday afternoon, Jan.

Propane delivery truck turns over in Bear Valley Springs

The unidentified driver of a propane truck was taken to Kern Medical Center by ambulance this morning after the truck overturned on Deer Trail Driver in Bear Valley Springs.

Railroad project would increase traffic by 80%

A \$106.7 million rail improvement project that is winding its way through the approval process would increase freight train traffic through the Tehachapi Pass by about 80 percent by 2020.



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