

MOSQUES are to be protected with a special invisible liquid that marks valuable property, following a spate of break-ins.

In the past eight weeks burglars have targeted Blackburn mosques in Millham Street, Troy Street, Oak Street and Cedar Street and in some cases, have made off with cash and charity collection tins.

Community leaders are calling for residents living near the premises to report any suspicious behaviour.



A place of worship should be the last place to be burgled

COUN SAJID ALI

Coun Sajid Ali, of Bastwell ward, said: "I don't know if it is because of the credit crunch and people wanting to grab anything they can, but these attacks on mosques have risen.

"A place of worship is the last place that anyone should think to steal from.

"Those who go to the mosques and anyone who lives nearby should keep an eye out for thieves and report anything unusual to police."

Police have now given Smart-

# Theft-hit mosques get tough

By SALLY HENFIELD  
Crime Reporter

water kits to all 14 mosques in the Brookhouse, Bastwell and Shear Brow areas and will be rolling the initiative out to others in the near future.

Smartwater is a transparent liquid which has a unique identification barcode, invisible to the naked eye, and can be marked on to property to show ownership.

"It is transferred on to a thief's skin and police can scan offenders at the police station to prove that

they have stolen a marked item." PC Ayub Mal, Blackburn north east neighbourhood police team, said: "We have spoken to representatives from each mosque.

"The Smartwater is being put on office equipment, high value property and entry points to the buildings so if thieves try to break in or steal anything, they will get traces on them and their clothes.

"Smartwater is a very effective tool in deterring criminals and allowing us to return property back to its owner."



**FIGHTING CRIME:** PC Ayub Mal, left, with Coun Sajid Ali and PCSO Aitibar Sheikh at Cedar Street Mosque