

Ex-Scout leader may face more sex abuse charges

By Rob Karwath

At least 10 more youths say they were molested by a former Boy Scout leader and suburban parks director charged with sexually assaulting three Scouts, prosecutors said Thursday.

At a bond hearing in Chicago Ridge branch of Cook County Circuit Court, Assistant State's Atty. Harry Semrow said the suspect, Thomas E. Hacker, 51, of Burbank, "had contact with youths constantly" in eight years as a Scout leader and as a worker and director with the Burbank Park District.

In arguing for a \$2.5 million bond for Hacker, who has a criminal record involving two other cases of child sexual abuse, Semrow said Hacker "has indications of being a

pedophile. We consider him a threat to the community."

Associate Judge Richard La Cien set Hacker's bond at \$500,000. The decision brought grumbles from about 15 Scout parents in the courtroom who had applauded briefly when Semrow proposed the higher bond.

Semrow said the state's attorney's office will seek grand jury indictments that could increase the list of Hacker's alleged victims.

"I anticipate the filing of an additional 14 counts of aggravated criminal sexual abuse," Semrow said, "and 10 additional victims ranging in age from 10 to 14."

Cook County officials also are contacting prosecutors in nearby states and counties where Hacker

took his Scouts on campouts.

Hacker was arrested Wednesday and charged with six counts of aggravated criminal sexual assault against three boys in his Scout troop between 1983 and November. The boys were 11 and 12 years old when the alleged incidents began.

Two boys allegedly were assaulted on campouts in Cook County forest preserves, said Lisa Howard, a spokeswoman for the state's attorney's office. The third allegedly was assaulted before a basketball game at Burbank's Reavis High School.

Hacker resigned from the troop last November and quit as park district director in January amid allegations that he stole \$500 from a district safe, Howard said.

Hacker didn't admit to taking the

money but replaced it, apparently hoping that an investigation into his past would end, park district attorney Vincent Cainkar said Thursday.

The investigation ultimately uncovered Hacker's 1970 conviction in Indiana for sexual assault against a 14-year-old boy. At the time, Hacker taught English at an Indianapolis junior high school and was a Boy Scout leader.

The investigation into the alleged sexual abuse of the Scouts began Feb. 2, Howard said, when parents of two Scouts came to Burbank police with suspicions that their sons had been abused.

After Hacker's 1970 arrest on sex charges, Indiana Scout officials promised to place Hacker's name on a national list of adults unfit for

Scout positions—an act they said ensured that Hacker was "banned for life" from Scout activity.

But Scout officials in Chicago said annual computer checks of Hacker's name never turned up the 1970 incident.

Cainkar said park officials don't know whether Hacker's background was checked when he started working at the district. He said Hacker's personnel file is missing, and officials suspect Hacker removed it when he left.

In addition to the Indiana conviction, Semrow and Burbank police said at the bond hearing that Hacker was arrested in 1971 in Mt. Prospect on charges of taking indecent liberties with a child. Hacker received a year of court supervision, Burbank Detective Jack Touhy said.