

Helpful Community Watch Security Information

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Security Habits

All the security devices in the world will not keep you safe if you don't make a habit of using them. Healthy caution must become a habit.

1. Always answer the phone; otherwise, a potential burglar may think the home is unoccupied and break in. When you answer the phone, never let the caller know that you are home alone.
2. Always respond to your doorbell. First, check through the peephole viewer to see who is outside your door. Never open your door to anyone you do not know and fully trust.
3. In the case of service and repairmen, verify their identities and purposes with their dispatchers before you open the door. If you decide to allow them to enter, arrange to either have a friend or neighbor there with you or monitoring you with periodic phone calls.
4. Do not allow children to answer the door, because they are less cautious. Begin reinforcing good security habits at an early age.
5. Be careful about giving out information concerning yourself or where you live, either in person, by mail, or over the phone.
6. Do not put your name on your mailbox. In the phone book, list your name in a manner that does not indicate that you are a female or living alone.
7. Keep emergency phone numbers posted near your phones.
8. When returning home, make sure that you are not being followed. Be alert for anyone who may be waiting for you to unlock your door so that they can force their way in. Have your keys ready before you get to your door so that you can enter as quickly as possible.
9. When returning home, if you have any reason to believe that an unauthorized entry has been made while you were away, DO NOT ENTER! Go to a safe place immediately, such as a neighbor's house, and get help before you return.
10. If you live in an apartment complex, be especially cautious of laundry rooms, parking lots, or other isolated areas. Insist that those areas are well-lighted, and try to use these facilities only in the company of other trusted individuals.
11. Remember that there is strength in numbers. Join with your neighbors in an effort to watch out for each other and make your homes and families safe against criminal threats of all types. Your crime prevention officer or community police officer can help you start your own Community Watch.

Safety Starts at Home

1. Make sure your house is well lit. Turn on outside lights, spotlights, motion lights, etc. Leave several inside lights on timers while you are away to give your home that lived in look.
2. All exterior doors should be steel or made with a solid core. Deadbolts should be used to lock and secure your doors. A good deadbolt should have a 1" throw. If you have glass within 40" of the lock a burglar could reach in and unlock the door. A double cylinder lock (this type needs a key on both sides to unlock) should be used if glass is near the lock.
3. With sliding glass doors a pin through the frame, a locking device or broomstick in the track will help prevent the door from being opened from outside.
4. Do not leave a spare key hidden outside your house. Do not leave extra keys to your home or vehicle inside any of your vehicles, even if they are parked inside your garage.
5. Landscaping should not create hiding spaces or block windows or doors of your residence. Trees and shrubbery should be properly pruned to keep them from providing access to upper floors and creating blind spots.
6. Secure windows with locks or pins for both closed and partially opened positions. Use blinds and curtains for privacy.
7. Remove anything an intruder could use to gain access to your home i.e., ladders, wood, tables, chairs, lawn tools and children toys.
8. As an added since of security some residents have installed alarm systems. Consult with alarm companies for differences in the systems and decide which would benefit you. **The alarm system can only help if it used.**

Home Security Recommendations

Landscaping

Overgrown landscaping (bushes, trees, shrubs) situated in front of windows and around doors can provide easy concealment when burglarizing a home. It is recommended that bushes and shrubs be kept cut down to 3 ft off the ground, and that trees be trimmed up 6 ft off the ground. Maintained landscaping also shows pride in ownership and gives the house that “lived in look”.

Lighting

All entrances (front, side, rear) should have lighting with enough wattage to light up the entire entry area (porch, steps, decks). The lighting should also be bright enough for facial recognition during the evening and night hours. Adding flood lights to all sides of your home help in lighting the perimeter areas of the house and yard, and should operate on timers or motion sensors.

Fencing

Having a fence, whether it is around the entire yard or just the back yard, shows ownership and defines property lines. It is important to keep the fence in good repair and try to keep the gate locked when not in use. This also benefits when you have a dog, which is always an added security advantage. Privacy fencing, although nice, definitely serves its purpose for giving homeowners privacy from their neighbors and other surroundings. It also is beneficial to a burglar and gives them that extra advantage of concealment.

Sheds, Outdoor closets, Garages

Always keep any outdoor buildings (including attached and detached garages) secure with a strong hasp and padlock. Any property kept inside these structures should be inventoried with make, model and serial #s documented. Try chaining together lawn equipment with a chain or cable and secure them with a padlock. This will make it difficult for the burglar to remove any one item if they are chained together. Ladders should be kept in a secured place, and not stored on the outside area of a home.

Alarms

It is always beneficial to have an alarm system for your home. These systems can be suited to fit your personal and family needs, and can also provide coverage to outdoor buildings and garages. There are several reputable alarm companies in the area, so we recommend getting quotes from two or three companies before making a decision. Make sure that an alarm horn is installed on the outside of the home, so as to notify your neighbors and possibly a passing officer when the alarm is sounding.

Exterior Doors and Deadbolts

All exterior doors should be solid steel or solid wood. Hollow core doors, if used, should be for interior doors only. Any deadbolts that are situated within 40 inches of a window should be double cylinder (deadbolt that takes a key on both sides). Deadbolt throws should also be a minimum of 1 inch and strike plates should be secured with 3 inch screws or longer.

Windows and Sliding Glass Doors

All ground floor and top floor windows should be kept closed and locked when not in use. Newer model windows now come with ventilation latches, which is an extra security feature designed to allow the window to be opened a few inches without having the ability to raise it any higher. Window bolts can also be installed for extra security. Window bolts secure the top and bottom window frames together and can be found at local hardware stores. Sliding glass doors should be secured with a locking bar designed specifically for these types of doors or by putting a broom stick or other obstacle in the track. Sliding glass doors can also be lifted out of the frame. To avoid this, insert a few screws (spaced about ten inches apart) into the track allowing just enough clearance for the door to slide open, but don't put the screws flush into the track. If someone attempts to lift the door out of the frame, it will lift into the screws, thus not allowing it to happen.

Property Inventory / Light Timers / Engraving

As mentioned above, all applicable property should be listed on an inventory sheet with make, model and serial #s documented. This along with photos of expensive valuables (jewelry, silverware etc) should be kept in a safe place and readily accessible (safety deposit box, fire safe). It is a good idea to engrave your driver license # on the back of electronic items. This will assist in property identification and seizure should it be recovered from criminals or from pawn shops. Interior lights should be set on timers to come on during different times during the day and evening hours. This shows that someone may be home even when the house is unoccupied.

Larceny from Vehicles

Don't allow someone to remove your valuables from the inside of your vehicle.

Please consider the following tips to prevent **YOU** from becoming a victim.

- Always lock your doors and roll up your windows
- Never leave valuable items in your vehicle
- Store packages in the trunk of your vehicle while shopping
- Remove items such as telephones, ipods, purses, briefcase, backpack, cash and even loose change each time you leave your vehicle.
- Park in well lit areas at night
- Park vehicle in the driveway rather than the street
- Consider a car alarm for added protection
- Call 911 if you see any suspicious activity

ENCOURAGE YOUR FAMILY, FRIENDS AND CO-WORKERS TO KEEP VALUABLES OUT OF THEIR VEHICLES AT HOME, WORK OR WHILE RUNNING ERRANDS.

Jogging and Walking

People in our community are becoming more concerned about their health and therefore choosing to jog or walk in an effort to becoming more physically fit. They can also be susceptible to criminal attack. Some may become so preoccupied in their physical activity that they fail to be alert and pay attention to their surroundings. By following these safety tips you can reduce the opportunity of becoming a victim of a crime.

- Be alert, walk with authority, look ahead and scan your surroundings.
- Jog or walk with a known companion.
- Always jog or walk in a familiar area; avoid heavily wooded, poorly lighted or secluded areas.
- Be aware of your surroundings; avoid wearing devices with earphones that will disable you from hearing activities around you.
- Wear bright colored clothing to improve visibility; avoid exercising after dark.
- Vary your route, if you think you are being followed go to the nearest residence, open business or group of people and seek help.
- Carry a cell phone to use for emergencies; avoid leisurely talking on the phone when walking, criminals prey on people that are distracted.
- Be extra alert to someone who asks for directions and continues to engage you in conversation.

Vacation Security

1. Do not publicize the fact that you are going on vacation.
2. Put lights and a radio on timers.
3. Burn an outside light all night, not just when you go away.
4. Do not close your blinds and curtains if you do not normally do so while you are home.
5. Do not stop deliveries! Have a neighbor pick them up for you, as well as circulars that accumulate by the front door.
6. Make arrangements to have the lawn cut while you are away.
7. Turn your telephone ringer down to low or turn on the answering machine. Do not leave messages saying that you are on vacation or when you will return home.
8. Lock all doors (including garage doors), windows and screens before leaving.
9. Store items such as lawn furniture, garden tools and hanging baskets in a secure area of your residence.
10. Ask neighbors to look out for your residence while you are away.
11. Consider asking a neighbor to park a vehicle in your driveway during your absence.
12. Leave a phone number with a neighbor where you can be contacted in case of an emergency.
13. Call you police department to request additional patrols of your residence while you are away.
14. If you do not have a neighbor that can pick up your mail and newspapers have them stopped during the time that you are away.