

Crime Prevention Tips Preventing Residential Burglaries

Residential burglaries literally hit close to home. There is almost nothing more personal than having one's home, and one's privacy, invaded by an unwelcome outsider.

Things a Burglar Looks For When "Shopping" for a Home:

- A home that looks unoccupied. Are there newspapers piling up on the lawn? Is the mailbox overflowing? Are the lights always on or always off? Are vehicles that are usually in the driveway not there, or vehicles in the driveway not being used for days on end?
- Can a burglar's access to the home be easily hidden? Are there high hedges that block windows? On the rear of the home, does a fence block sightlines of doors and windows? At night, does a lack of outside lighting make it hard to see what's going on around the perimeter of the home?
- Is there an alarm in the home? If a burglar eyes an alarm company sign or stickers, he'll usually think twice about striking that home.
- The schedule of the residents. Most residential burglaries take place during work hours, because often homes are unoccupied during these hours. When do the residents leave for work? When do they return from work? Do they come home for lunch?
- What's in the trash? Is the box from the new 60" plasma HD TV prominently displayed on the curb, awaiting trash pickup?
- During the holidays, window shopping takes on a whole new meaning. A holiday tree prominently displayed in the front window, complete with holiday gifts, makes for great window shopping for burglars.
- Open garage doors. Not only property to steal, but tools to use for this and future burglaries. Ladders, hammers, saws, drills....
- Dogs. Burglars don't like dogs. Even small dogs, with big barks, make a home a little less attractive to burglars. Remember: criminals don't like witnesses, and don't like noise.
- Unlocked doors and windows. Most homes have a least one window that the owner has forgotten to lock. Opening a door or window makes a lot less noise than breaking glass.
- Where is the spare key? Burglars know all the hiding spots.

Things Homeowners Can Do to Make it Harder for a Burglar

- Lock all doors and windows. On the subject of locks, invest in a good lock. Deadbolt locks with long bolts that terminate in a good, solid door frame makes breaking down a door a chore. And, invest in a good, solid core door.
- Keep shrubs trimmed back. If windows are visible, it's easier for neighbors or police to spot a broken window. Also, consider "thorny" shrubs. If it's painful to access a window over shrubs, that's a deterrent.
- Keep your garage door closed at all times. Not only does this prevent items from being stolen, it also takes away another sign that you're home or away.
- If you have a garage, use it to store your vehicles. This makes it harder for crooks to not only determine when you're home and when you're gone, but also helps prevent them from burglarizing your vehicles.
- Get to know your neighbors. A great deterrent to crime. Extra sets of eyes keeping a watch on your property, reporting suspicious activity, and helping keep you safe. Be sure and return the favor and keep an eye on their home, too.
- Consider an alarm system. Most insurance companies offer discounts for alarms, and some systems also monitor for fire.
- Watch what you throw out with the trash. If you've purchased a new TV, computer, or other expensive item, consider another way to dispose of the box. Will the store dispose of the box in their trash for you? Can you cut up the box and place in garbage bags?
- When away for long periods of time, use timers for lights to give the home a lived in look. Leave a radio or TV on at a conversational volume level. Have a neighbor pick up your paper and mail, and accept packages. Have that neighbor remove door hangers and other advertisements that pile up on the front door.
- Consider a safe deposit box for jewelry storage, especially expensive jewelry, or jewelry you don't wear often.
- Join or form a crime watch group. Getting to know a lot of your neighbors, and inviting the police to your meetings, is a powerful tool in your arsenal against crime.
- Turn on exterior lighting after dark. Use the same schedule for lighting when your away that you do when you're home. Consider timers for exterior lights.
- Think like a burglar. Ask yourself, "what would a burglar find when he looks at my house that would be inviting?"

Remember that YOU are an important partner in the fight against crime.