

The Complete Guide To Home Security

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HOME SECURITY 101

The most common threat to our home is burglary. That's right, the place where we're supposed to feel the most secure. According to the FBI, a burglary occurs somewhere in the United States every 14.4 seconds. By definition, the crime of burglary is a non-confrontational crime. However, becoming a burglary victim can leave a family feeling both violated and vulnerable. To avoid becoming a burglary victim, it is important to first gain an understanding of who commits these crimes and why, and secondly what preventative measures you can take to make your dwelling unattractive to potential burglars.

The majority burglaries occur during the daytime when most people are away at work, school or on vacation. The summer months of July and August (vacation season) have the most burglaries. Although the act of burglary is committed by all races and both genders, most burglaries are committed by males under 25 years of age looking for items that are small, expensive, and can easily be converted into cash. Favorite items include cash, jewelry, TV, iPods, watches, laptop computers, DVD/VCRs, CDs and other small electronic devices are high on the list. Although a burglar's preference is to gain easy access through an open door or window, statistics show that over 70% of burglars use force to enter the dwelling. Common household tools like screwdrivers, channel-lock pliers, pry bars, and hammers are most often used by burglars. Burglars continue to flourish because police can only clear about 20% of all reported burglaries and rarely catch the thief in the act.

“Minimize your risk by making your home unattractive to potential burglars.”

SECURE YOUR DOORS AND LOCKS

The first step and a very important step in home security is to make your home more difficult to enter. Remember, the burglar will simply bypass your home if it requires too much effort or requires more skill and tools than they possess. Most burglars enter via the front, back, sliding or garage doors. Experienced burglars know that the garage door is usually the weakest point of entry followed by the back door. The garage and back doors also provide the most cover. Burglars know to look inside your car for keys and other valuables so keep it locked, even when parked inside your garage. Use high quality Grade-1 or Grade-2 locks on exterior doors to resist twisting, prying, and lock-picking attempts. A quality deadbolt lock will have a beveled casing

to inhibit the use of channel-lock pliers used to shear off lock cylinder pins. A quality door knob-in-lock set will have a 'dead latch' mechanism to prevent slipping the lock with a shim or credit card.

Key Points

- Use a solid core or metal door for all entrance points.
- Use a quality, heavy-duty, deadbolt lock with a one-inch throw bolt.
- Use a quality, heavy-duty, knob-in-lock set with a dead-latch mechanism.
- Use a heavy-duty, four-screw, strike plate with 3-inch screws to penetrate into a wooden door frame.
- Use a wide-angle 160° peephole mounted no higher than 58 inches.

SLIDING GLASS DOORS

Check your sliding glass door to see if it has an actual lock on it. Sliding glass doors usually do not have locks on them, only latches. These latches are usually made of soft aluminum or cast metal and quite often become worn or out of adjustment. Older sliding glass doors can be lifted up and off their track and thereby defeat the latch mechanism. To prevent lifting, you need to keep the door rollers in good condition and properly adjusted. You can also install anti-lift devices such as a pin that extends through both the sliding and fixed portion of the door.

Because of their location (usually at the rear of the home) and the many inadequate latching mechanisms on the market, sliding glass doors usually offer little resistance against physical attack. This, combined with the wear and tear factor, makes these doors a prime candidate for a break and enter.

With the warmer weather around the corner, sliding glass doors are often left open to allow ventilation or pet access. Unfortunately, complacency often results in an opportunity for a burglar to take advantage of an open door. This doesn't mean that we have to spend all spring and summer with our sliding glass doors locked up tighter than a drum. It simply means that we have to take a few precautions to ensure that we keep the intruders away.

This can be easily accomplished by inserting a wooden dowel or stick into the track. It is important that the wooden dowel runs the whole length of the track preventing or limiting movement of the door. If your sliding glass door

slides on the outside, place the wooden dowel between the handle and the stationary part of the sliding door ensuring limited movement.

There are various other blocking devices available that fold down and prevent the door from being pried open. These devices are called "Charley Bars" and are available through several manufacturers.

Place highly visible security decals on the glass door near the latch mechanism that indicates that an alarm system, a dog, or block watch/operation identification is in place. Burglars dislike alarm systems and definitely big barking dogs. You can find quality security decals at <http://www.alarmsticker.com>.

Key Points

- Place a dowel, stick, or blocking device in the tracking of your sliding door.
- Keep the latch mechanism in good condition and properly adjusted.
- Keep sliding door rollers in good condition and properly adjusted.
- Use anti-lift devices such as through-the-door pins or upper track screws.
- Use highly visible alarm decals, beware of dog decals or block watch decal.

WINDOWS

Make sure that all window locks are secured at all times. If you must have a window open for fresh air, make sure that it is not left unattended. Sixty percent of all residential burglaries happen because doors and windows are left open or unlocked. Windows are left unlocked and open at a much higher rate than doors. An open window, visible from the street or alley, may be the sole reason for your home to be selected by a burglar. Ground floor windows are more susceptible to break-ins for obvious reasons. Upper floor windows become attractive if they can be accessed from a stairway, tree, fence, or by climbing on balconies. Windows have latches, not locks and therefore should have secondary blocking devices to prevent sliding them open from the outside. Inexpensive wooden dowels and sticks

work well for horizontal sliding windows and through-the-frame pins work well for vertical sliding windows. For ventilation, block the window open no more than six inches and make sure you can't reach in from the outside and remove the blocking device or reach through and unlock the door. In sleeping rooms, these window blocking devices should be capable of being removed easily from the inside to comply with fire codes. Like sliding glass doors, anti-lift devices are necessary for ground level and accessible aluminum windows that slide horizontally. The least expensive and easiest method is to install screws half-way into the upper track of the movable glass panel to prevent it from being lifted out in the closed position. As a deterrent, place highly visible decals on the glass door near the latch mechanism that indicates that an alarm system, a dog, or block watch/operation identification system is in place.

Key Points

- Secure all accessible windows with secondary blocking devices.
- Block accessible windows open no more than 6 inches for ventilation.
- Make sure someone cannot reach through an open window and unlock the door.
- Make sure someone cannot reach inside the window and remove the blocking device.
- Use anti-lift devices to prevent window from being lifted out.
- Use crime prevention or alarm decals on ground accessible windows.

ALARM SYSTEMS

Alarm systems definitely have a place in a home security plan and are effective, if used properly. The reason why alarms systems deter burglaries is because they increase the potential and fear of being caught and arrested by the police. **The deterrent value comes from the alarm decals on windows and doors and any other signage on the lawn or property. Visit the website <http://www.alarmsticker.com>** for quality home security decals. Home and apartment burglars will usually bypass a property with visible alarm signs and will go to another property without such visual deterrents. Some people, with alarm systems, feel that these signs and decals are unsightly and choose not to display them. The risk here is that an uninformed burglar might break a window or door and grab a few quick items before the police can respond. Alarm systems need to

be properly installed and maintained. Alarms systems can monitor for fire as well as burglary for the same price.

Key Points

- Alarm systems are effective deterrents with **visible decals and signage from <http://www.alarmsticker.com>**.
- Alarm systems to be properly installed, programmed, and maintained.
- Alarm systems need to have an audible horn or bell to be effective.
- Make sure your alarm response call list is up to date.
- Instruct your neighbor how to respond to an alarm bell.

IMPORTANCE OF LIGHTING

Interior lighting is necessary to show signs of life and activity inside a residence. A dark home night after night sends the message to burglars that you are out of town or away on a trip. Light timers are inexpensive and can be found everywhere. They should be used on a daily basis, not just when you are away. In this way you set up a routine that your neighbors can observe and will allow them to become suspicious when your normally lighted home becomes dark. Typically, you want to use light-timers near the front and back windows with the curtains drawn. The pattern of them clicking on and off simulates actual occupancy. It is also comforting not to have to enter a dark residence. The same light timers can be used to turn on radios or television sets to further enhance the illusion of occupancy.

Exterior lighting is also very important. It becomes critical if you park in a common area parking lot or underground parking garage and need to walk to your front door. The purpose of good lighting is to allow you to see if a threat or suspicious person is lurking in your path. If you can see a potential threat in advance then you at least have the choice and chance to avoid it. Exterior lighting needs to be bright enough for you to see 100 feet and it helps if you can identify colors. Good lighting is definitely a deterrent to criminals because they don't want to be seen or identified.

Key Points

- Use interior light timers to establish a pattern of occupancy.
- Exterior lighting should allow 100 foot visibility.
- Use good lighting along the pathway and at your door.
- Use light timers or photo-cells to turn on/off lights automatically.
- Use infra-red motion sensor lights on the rear of single family homes.

GET A DOG

A barking dog, whether inside the house or in the yard is proven as the best deterrent to burglars. It doesn't have to be a 250 - pound Rottweiler named Spike, even a smaller yappy dog serves as an early warning system. Not only does the intruder risk a bite, but the barking attracts attention. And there is no such thing as a stranger intimidating a dog into silence. The truth is a dog, even a small dog inside a house is not something a burglar wants to deal with. Getting bit is not fun.

PRETEND TO BE A BURGLAR

Walk around your property and ask yourself: How would I break in? Examine your house from the street, where are the blind spots? What are the most vulnerable areas and, therefore, likely to break in? Stand outside the windows and look in, make sure no valuables, like expensive electronics or artwork, are visible. If you can see your belongings doing this, so can criminals.

BE A GOOD NEIGHBOR

Good neighbors should look out for each other. Get to know your neighbors on each side of your home and the three directly across the street. Invite them into your home, communicate often, and establish trust. Good neighbors will watch out for your home or apartment when you are away, if you ask them. They can report suspicious activity to the police or to you while you are away. Between them, good neighbors can see to it that normal services continue in your absence by allowing vendors to mow your lawn or remove snow. Good neighbors can pick up your mail, newspapers, handbills, and can inspect the outside or inside of your home periodically to see that all is well. Good neighbors will occasionally park in your driveway to give the appearance of occupancy while you are on vacation. Allowing a neighbor to have a key solves the problem of hiding a key outside the door. Experienced burglars know to look for hidden keys in planter boxes, under doormats, and above the ledge. Requiring a service vendor to see your neighbor to retrieve and return your house key will send the message that someone is watching. This neighborhood watch technique sets up what is called 'territoriality' which means

that your neighbors will take ownership and responsibility for what occurs in your mini-neighborhood. This concept works in both single family homes communities and on apartment properties. This practice helps deter burglaries and other crimes in a big way. Of course for this to work, you must reciprocate and offer the same services.

Key Points

- Get to know all your adjacent neighbors.
- Invite them into your home and establish trust.
- Agree to watch out for each other's home.
- Do small tasks for each other to improve territoriality.
- While on vacation, pick up newspapers, and flyers.
- Offer to park your car in their driveway.
- Return the favor and communicate often.

THE IMPORTANCE OF VISUAL DETERRANTS

Although your property may be protected by a security system, if this protection is not clearly marked, you could be inviting dangerous theft attempts from burglars.

That's why one of the most important factors in property security is a professionally designed alarm sticker. AlarmSticker.com provides industry-quality security decals which you can confidently apply to your property and be sure the right security message is projected. Our Authentic high quality vinyl decals serve as a visual deterrent for potential break-ins and are highly recommended even if you have the most advanced security system. Use AlarmSticker.com's decals as replacements for your old ones, or to supplement the ones you have to ensure full property coverage.

Even if you can't justify the expense of a full security system, security decals from AlarmSticker.com will go a long way to deter thieves, who look for easy targets and normally avoid properties which convincingly advertise the presence of an alarm system.

AlarmSticker.com is the simplest way to maximize your security and protect your property and loved ones.

