

How to Help Prevent Burglaries to Homes and Apartments

The Basic Rule: Lock Your Doors and Windows

Here are numerous tips about preventing crimes against your place of residence. Some interesting facts to keep in mind: Burglary is a very frequent crime. Many crimes occur in the daytime. Juveniles commit many of them. Burglars come from every economic, social, educational and racial background. Burglars will dress to suit the area they are planning to burglarize many times. Daylight burglars like rainy or stormy days. The home with no outside lighting at night or with easy access is more likely to be burglarized.

Always install new locks in a home or apartment when moving in, even if it is a newly built home. Never use locks someone else has had a key to. This means back, side and front doors. Never leave an extra key to the house in the mailbox, under doormats, over door frames or anywhere else-they are easily found.

Don't give your key to anyone except the people living inside the home or apartment.

Install a small "peephole" in the front and back door and use it to look before you open a door for someone, whether it is nighttime or daytime.

When answering the door, ask to see proper identification; if the person is a salesman, solicitor, repairman or utility company representative, he or she will have proper identification.

- **Lighting**

Outside: light up the side of the house, back and front and garage area with nightlights; few homes with such lighting are ever "hit".

- Inside: leave at least one light on (plus a bathroom light); do not pull the shades or curtains when not at home.

When not at home: don't leave a note saying when you will return and make sure you close the garage door when leaving (lock it too).

- **Locks**

Do not use the spring-snap locks; they are opened very easily and practically without any sound.

- Do not buy any cheap locks- they are hardly worth the risk.
- Use dead-bolt locks (especially the ones that require a key); or use sliding barrel locks; use crossbars and hasp locks on garage, cellar and other such doors.
- Check your door hinges . . . if the pins are on the outside, change them to the inside (or to non-removable ones) to prevent a burglar from removing them to open the door and get in.
- Make sure locks are away from windows (to prevent the window from being smashed and the burglar reaching in to unlock it).
- Use chain locks as an added precaution on all entries.
- Remember: it does little good to have good locks on the front door and poor locks elsewhere.
- Don't put your name or address on the key case you carry; if lost or stolen, change locks regardless of whether you had your name or address inside the case.

- Strong door frames and window frames: it does little good to attach good locks to door frames or window frames when the frames are weak, rotted or defective. Make sure your frames are solid and as strong as the locks and hinges. Your landlord (if you rent) is responsible for having good locks and good door and window frames.
- Windows: not only should every window have a lock on it (the best is a key lock), but it should have an additional lock that prevents it from being lifted higher than four inches.
- Apartments: renters should never allow their apartment to be on a "master key" arrangement; ask about this and change your lock if the landlord will not.
- Do not leave ladders outside the house; they are perfect devices for entry.
- Do not leave rugs, wash or tools and other items outside the home overnight.
- Keep the shrubbery trimmed away from windows and keep it trimmed to a low height; they are excellent places for someone to hide and not be seen when burglarizing.
- Sliding doors are used frequently by burglars to enter. There should be two locks on such doors . . . plus put a sliding board or broom handle braced inside the track to prevent the door from opening from the outside.
- Padlock your garage (it is a good entry point for burglars).
- Constantly check your locks (especially ones at doors and windows you do not use often); if any have been tampered with, replace immediately and report it to the police.
- Be sure, at night as well as daytime, that yard gates and other such locations are closed; and install a lock or latch so the gate cannot be opened from the outside; many burglars prefer a place where very easy access is provided-opening and closing a gate takes time, attracts attention, makes noise, etc.
- Teach children not to open the door to strangers at anytime.

- Always keep the door locked even when you are in the house; because you are there does not mean someone would not come in anyway.
- Windows with air conditioners: a favorite point of entry for burglars. Nail or screw the window in place. This prevents the window from being opened and prevents the air conditioner from being stolen.
- Locks for mailboxes: a must for home and apartment; it is too easy to steal your mail. Get a U.S. Post Office approved lock.
- Engrave items with driver license number or a personal identifier like date of birth. For items that cannot be engraved, write down their descriptions, take a picture and keep in a safe place. Use this to identify stolen items and it will allow you to recover them if stolen. (If you cannot prove an item is yours, you cannot receive it even if police have recovered it).
- Aside from locking the garage, never leave the key to the car or anything else in the car or garage.
- When working in the back yard, don't leave the front door unlocked or the garage doors open. Even if running next door for a minute, don't leave the house open and doors unlocked . . . many thefts and burglaries occur this way without the owner or renter knowing it.
- Glass: use break-resistant glass at every window possible, especially in doors.
- Do not install a "doggie door" in any of your doors leading to the outside or into the garage; they can become "burglar doors" too.