Home Security Tips For the Homeowner

The Burglary Threat

Residential burglary is a national, rapidly growing, costly, and potentially dangerous crime that can lead to other crimes. When your home is burglarized, you'll probably lose a radio, TV, stereo, CD, DVD player, cash, camera, or jewelry. But more importantly, you will loose your peace of mind and the sense of safety your home has brought to you. Additionally, the safety and welfare of your family may be jeopardized.

Many people believe house burglars are professional criminals—experts at defeating the most elaborate security measures. Yet, in most cases, residential burglary is a crime of opportunity committed by amateurs who look for easy targets, such as poorly secured homes or homes that look unoccupied. You can lessen the opportunity and minimize the chance of burglary by making your home as difficult as possible to enter. All that is needed is a little effort to take the preventative steps recommended in this booklet!

The quality of hardware and preventative measures described on the following pages will deter, delay, and help to detect a burglar. This will increase the chance of an alert neighbor or area deputy in observing the thief resulting in his or her arrest.

The time to install hardware is **now**, not after a burglary has occurred!

Don't forget that burglary prevention goes beyond good locks and household security. It includes being a good neighbor and reporting **any** suspicious activity, person or vehicle to the Sheriff's Office. Neighborhood security requires neighborhood cooperation.

Neighborhood Watch

If properly organized and actively supported, Neighborhood watch groups are a proven means of reducing burglary and other typical street crimes. The objective is to have neighbors watch for emergencies or unusual behavior and report them to the Sheriff's Office.

Neighborhood watch members are trained by the Sheriff's Office Crime Prevention unit to identify and report suspicious or criminal behavior. The Neighbors will then continue in meeting regularly to discuss with each other crime issues within the community. They will have the Sheriff's Office as contacts for resources to do further training, crime analysis, and report suspicious or criminal behavior. To organize a Neighborhood watch group, call the Greenville County Sheriff's Office Crime Prevention Unit at **422-2036.**

Operation Identification

If you are a victim of burglary or other crime, the chances of your property being recovered and returned are greatly increased if your possessions have been "personalized." Engrave your driver's license number along with the "SCDL" prefix on the back metal plates of your appliances, stereos, TV etc. This will allow the item to be placed on the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) computer when it gets stolen, so that any law enforcement official can know who the owner is and where it was stolen. This adds to the possibility of recovery. Items that can not be engraved, such as jewelry, antiques, firearms or heirlooms, should be photographed and regularly appraised for accurate value. A written record should be made of all valuable items with serial numbers, make, model, reasonable replacement cost, and general description. This record will help the Sheriff's Office in reporting the theft and getting your items back to you. It will also help in the prosecution of those who do not respect your property or safety

Outside Your Home

Here is what you can do outside your home to make it less appealing to burglars.

1. Trim shrubs so windows and doors are in full view from the street. A good rule of thumb is no plantings taller that 3' or hanging lower than 7" should be around the windows. Unobstructed doors and windows are a deterrent because the intruder is forced to work in the open where detection is more likely.

2. Maintain and use adequate lighting, especially at entry points. The power company will usually install a yard/alley light for a reasonable cost.

3. Don't leave ladders and tools lying around outside where burglars can use them to enter your home.

4. All valuables like lawn mowers and bicycles should be locked in your garage or shed.

5. Always keep your garage doors closed and locked. This prevents burglars from entering your home through the door leading from your garage into your home. Additionally, it takes only seconds to walk into an open garage to steal work and yard tools.

6. House numbers should be large, prominently displayed and well-lighted to insure they can be easily read from the street. This helps the Sheriff's Office and EMS to find your home in an emergency. Urge your neighbors to do the same. It is also the law to have your address marked.

What about Burglar Alarms?

A properly installed, quality alarm system can significantly improve your overall security, however, alarm systems can be expensive for a private residence. A complete system, including 24 hour monitoring service, can run from a few hundred to several thousand dollars depending upon what you wish the system to do for you. Monthly monitoring service fees average from about $25 to $70. You can forego a central station hookup for a less expensive alarm system that will simply make a lot of racket when a burglar

attempts to enter you home or garage. These are known as "local" or "audible" alarms and depend upon a neighbor hearing the alarm and notifying the Sheriff's Office. There are no systems available to homeowners that notify the Sheriff's Office directly. Here are a few tips on shopping for alarm systems.

1. Keep it as simple as appropriate. Avoid extremely elaborate systems requiring constant maintenance just to stay in operation. However, be sure to include smoke and heat detectors as part of your installation!

2. Avoid extra "gadget" accessories or systems with complicated on/off procedures. Setting the system should require little more than turning a key or pushing a few buttons on a key pad.

3. Ensure that your alarm system features emergency back up battery power in the event of electrical failure.

4. As a general rule, it is strongly recommended that all residential systems have an audible signal device (usually a siren) whether monitored or not. Ideally, audible signal devices should be used inside and out.

5. Shop carefully! Get two or more estimates. Feel free to call out office for answers to general questions about alarm systems.
6. As with any major purchase, check for service after the sale. Know what will be involved in maintaining your system before you purchase it. Check with other customers and/or the Better Business Bureau to check for unresolved complaints.

7. Ensure that all family members have a basic understanding of the system. The biggest cause of false alarms is user error. Know that in Greenville County multiple false alarms will cause you to be billed by the county for deputy response.

Entry Doors

Many residential doors are of the hollow core construction, which is thin wood veneer with nothing but cardboard fill. You can literally put your fist through a hollow core door. Such doors are designed for interior use only, such as bedrooms or closets. Exterior doors should be of solid wood or metal sheath construction. But whatever the door makeup, most burglars look for inadequate locking devices, like the ones below:

Spring Latch

Most doors come equipped with a spring latch, like the ones you see here. It offers **No** protection, and can be slipped or "shimmied" with a credit card or penknife.

The same lock, with a deadlatch or anti-shim device, prevents slipping. But it still can be forced, or the door spread from the frame.

Deadbolts

A deadbolt lock offers the best security. When you turn the key, a strong metal bolt slides out of the door and into the frame.

Single Cylinder Deadbolt

This deadbolt requires the use of a key from the outside, with a plain thumb turn on the inside.

Double Cylinder Deadbolt

This deadbolt requires the use of a key from both sides of the door, and boasts two principle advantages over the single cylinder lock. First, a burglar can't simply break out a pane of glass, reach in and flip a thumb turn. Second, if he does get in by other means, such as through a window, a door secured by a double cylinder deadbolt will be unavailable for removal of large items. His loot will be limited to what he can then fit through a window. Many people are concerned about the fire hazard created through the use of double cylinder deadbolts. In fact, in some areas, it is against the fire codes. For this reason,

Check with your local fire department, keep an extra key near the door in case of emergency, install smoke detector for early warning, have a family emergency plan and practice it.

Hollow core

Solid wood

Spring Latch

Dead latch

Single Cylinder Dead Bolt

Double Cylinder Dead Bolt

Overhead Garage Doors

For long range protection of overhead doors, such as during vacations or weekend trips, affix an inexpensive padlock to the inside frame. That way the doors cannot be raised even if the door lock is broken.

Hasps

No padlock is better that the hasp on which it is mounted. A good hasp is made of hardened steel, and is constructed in such a way that bolt heads are not visible when the hasp is in the closed position. Don't install a hasp with ordinary screws. Use long stove bolts, which go completely through the door or gate.

Casement Windows

Casement windows are usually easy to secure. Be sure that the latch works properly, and that the operating mechanism has no excessive play. If the window is seldom used, the operating handle could be removed for extra security.

Sliding Glass Doors

Charley-bars can be installed in minutes and block the moveable door in the closed position. These are more reliable than simply putting a broom handle in the track. Auxiliary key locks, often of a plunger design as shown here, prevent the door from being moved even if the regular lock on the door is forced. Preventing lifting of the sliding glass doors or windows off their channels by installing sheet metal screws in the upper track above the frame. Adjust screws so that the window or door just barely clears the screw head.

One additional consideration to increase the burglar resistance of sliding glass doors is to "pin" the doors. This is an easy and inexpensive process, which consists of drilling a small, downward angled hole at the top center of the door's frame through one door section into the other. This is done where the moving sliding portion of the door assembly overlaps the stationary section of the door assembly. Then, insert a steel pin or heavy nail into the hole. **Be careful to avoid drilling too close to the glass area of the doors**! Finally, place a wooden dowel snugly in the track to prevent the door being forced.

Overhead garage doors

Hasps

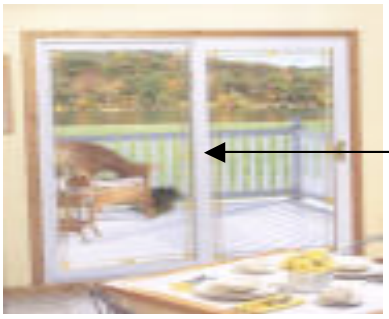
Casement Windows

Sliding Glass Doors

Auxiliary key lock

Screw

Screw in track



Pinning the sliding glass door

Safety at the door

Remember….Never open your door to a stranger. Always demand proper identification from salespeople or utility company employees. While this is common sense to adults, children must be continually reminded about this very important safety consideration. Keep in mind that chain locks are primarily a privacy device and should never be relied upon for maximum security. Consider installing a peephole device to enable you to see who is there **before** opening any door. As previously stated, doors are the primary target of entry for most residential criminals. The various safety hardware, techniques, and considerations will help you to make your home safer only if you remember to use them!

Window Protection

Windows are second only to doors as the most inviting means of entry for the determined burglar. There are ways to make windows more secure as well.

Double Hung Windows

You can easily secure your double hung wood sash windows by drilling a hole at the point where the two frames meet and inserting a dowel, heavy metal pin or nail. Make sure the hole goes all the way through the inner sash, but only partially through the outer sash. Drill the hole at a downward slanting angle, to resist dislodging the pin by shaking or vibration.

Auxiliary Window Lock

Even more secure are the auxiliary keyed window locks, such as the plunger style locks. These locks prevent the window from being opened even if the glass is broken. Your locksmith can show you several different models of window locks for both metal and wood sash.

Bars and Grillwork

Basement windows are a favorite means of illegal entry, often due to their concealment. Since they are seldom needed as a fire exit, the can be effectively secured with inexpensive bars. Bars should be flat steel, three sixteenths inch by one and one half inch and be mounted into masonry with heavy bolts. There should be no more than six inches between bars.

Padlocks

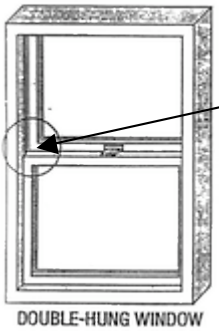
Most households make use of one or two padlocks somewhere. A good one will have a heavy body or laminate construction, toe and heel locking, and a hardened steel shackle. Remember to erase or file off key numbers, which may appear on the bottom of the padlock. Unauthorized keys can be made from this number.

Door Strikes and Frames

A deadbolt lock is no more effective than the striker plate and door frame it engages. Look for a snug fit between the lock and the striker plate. If your door strike is installed with a small, half-inch screws, replace them with three inch screws which anchor into the stud. This method adds considerable strength to your door.

Pinned Hinges

If your exterior doors swing outward, the hinges are on the outside. A burglar can easily remove the hinge pins and lift or pry the door. This is easily prevented by removing the center screw from each side of the hinge and inserting a headless screw of dowel in one side.



Pinned Window

Auxiliary Window Lock

Bars and Grillwork

Padlocks

Door strikes and frames

Pinned Hinge

Security for Double Doors

Double doors can be very difficult to secure, but not impossible. Many of these doors incorporate slide bolts mounted on the inactive door. These are weak and inadequate. For maximum security, install cane or flush bolts at the top and bottom.

Drop bolts

Drop bolt device, sometimes called vertical throw bolts, offer protection similar to conventional deadbolts. The bolt engages vertical pins in a receiving plate and provides excellent security as long as it is installed on a strong door and frame.

Security Lighting

Since most burglars don't like to be observed while they are working, they often shun well-lighted areas. A few exterior lights, mounted either on yard poles or beneath the eaves of your house and shining at a downward slanting angle, provide extra security and peace of mind. Avoid any type of lighting that causes glare in the direction of the street. Such lighting is counter-productive to security. Since you want deputies and passersby to glance in the direction of your home and not away from it.

Shrubbery

Keep shrubbery, trees, and other foliage away from windows and doors. They provide excellent coverage for a burglar to work without risk of detection.

Double Door Security

Drop Bolt

Exterior Lighting

External Shrubbery

Emergency Calls
Dial 9-1-1

All other calls
Dial 271-5210

Presented as a service of the

Greenville County Sheriff's Office

Crime Prevention Unit
422-2037

Vacation Tips

Securing your home prior to leaving on your trip

1. Lock all doors and windows.

2. Leave all shades and blinds in their normal positions

3. Advise a trusted neighbor of your travel plans and ask him or her to watch out for suspicious people and activity around your home and property.

4. Call the Greenville County Sheriff's Office at 271-5210 for a vacation house watch (extra Patrol). Provide them with emergency numbers, key holders and other security details and they will alert the patrol deputies to watch out for your property.

5. Don't allow deliveries of any kind to accumulate on your doorstep. If you do not wish to cancel deliveries, arrange for a neighbor to pick them up. Don't forget to have your mail held for your return or pick up by a neighbor.

6. Arrange for lawn mowing at proper times.

7. Connect one or two lamps and perhaps a radio to an automatic timer. They are inexpensive and help to make your home appear "occupied".

8. Refrain form publicizing your exciting vacation or trip until after your return.