



## **TIPS FOR HOME SECURITY**

By far, the most common threat to our home is burglary. According to the FBI, a burglary occurs somewhere in the United States every 15.4 seconds. Becoming a burglary victim can leave a family feeling vulnerable and violated. To avoid becoming a burglary victim, it is important to first gain an understanding of who commits them and why.

The majority of residential burglaries occur during the daytime when most people are away at work or school. Burglaries are committed most often by young males under 25 years of age looking for items that are small, expensive, and can easily be converted to cash. Favorite items are cash, jewelry, guns, watches, laptop computers, video players, CDs and other small electronic devices are high on the list. Quick cash is needed for living expenses and drugs. Statistics tell us that 70% of the burglars use some amount force to enter a dwelling, but their preference is to gain easy access through an open door or window. Ordinary household tools like screwdrivers, channel-lock pliers, small pry bars, and small hammers are most often used by burglars. Burglars continue to flourish because police can only clear about 13% of all reported burglaries and rarely catch the thief in the act. Due to lack of witnesses and residential security cameras, little evidence is available for a successful investigation.

Although home burglaries may seem random in occurrence, they actually involve a selection process. The burglar's selection process is simple. Choose an unoccupied home with the easiest access, the greatest amount of cover, and with the best escape routes. Sleepy Hollow is a burglar's paradise. We have a massive noise block wall along I-4, quick access to I-4, and lots of trees for cover/concealment. What follows is a list of suggestions to minimize your risk by making your home unattractive to potential burglars.

### **DOORS AND LOCKS**

Always remember, the idea is to make it harder for a burglar to target your home. If a burglar thinks it will take too much effort, the burglar will most likely skip your house. Upgrading doors and locks are the first line of defense.

- 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 PATIO DOORS**

Sliding doors use latches not locks. They are also vulnerable to a breach because these doors are commonly lifted off of the track to gain entry or easily pried due to a weak latch.

- Use a secondary blocking device on all sliding glass doors
- 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**

Windows are used as a point of entry more commonly than doors. It is important to remember that windows use latches not locks. A secondary locking device is the best way to prevent a burglar from breaching your window.

- 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

## **LIGHTING**

Interior lighting is necessary to show signs of life and activity inside a residence at night. A darkened home night-after-night sends the message to burglars that you are away on a trip. It can be beneficial to leave internal lights on utilizing a timer, or a radio/TV to create the illusion the home is occupied. Exterior lighting is also very important. Good lighting is definitely a deterrent to criminals because they don't want to be seen or identified.

- Use interior light timers to establish a pattern of occupancy
- Exterior lighting should allow 100- feet of 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

## **ALARMS**

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 company lawn sign and from the alarm decals on the windows.

- Alarm systems are effective deterrents with visible signage
- 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

### **HOME SAFES**

Having a safe in your home is a wise investment. Home safes are designed to keep the smash and grab burglar, nosy kids, dishonest babysitter or housekeeper from gaining access to important documents and personal property. Home safes need to be anchored into the floor or permanent shelving.

- Use the safe everyday so it becomes routine
- Protect the safe code and change it occasionally
- Install it away from the master bedroom or closet

### **MISCELLANEOUS TIPS**

Identify valuables and expensive tools by engraving your name in a discreet location on the item. In the event of a theft of your item, this will help police identify the owner. Photograph and record serial numbers of valuables (TV's, firearms, power tools etc.) It is also a great idea to refrain from placing empty boxes at your curb on trash day. This telegraphs to potential burglars that a brand new expensive item may inside the residence. If you buy a brand new TV, take the box with you to work and dispose of it in a dumpster, rather than leaving it in front of your home. If you are away on a trip, it is smart to contact the post office to hold your mail, and have a neighbor collect newspapers. If these items accumulate, it is a telltale sign that the residence is unoccupied.

Always remember ***IF YOU SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING!*** The police would rather respond to 100 calls that turn out to be nothing, than not get dispatched to the one call that is a legitimate crime in progress. Often times, neighbors see suspicious vehicles/persons and just assume the individual belongs in the area. Something as small as an alert neighbor providing information such as race/sex or make/model of a vehicle can be a big piece of the puzzle in an investigation. By following these tips, we can all work together to keep our neighborhood and our homes safe.

***This list was created by Sergeant Derek Chenoweth of the Longwood Police Department on behalf of the Home Owner's Association of Sleepy Hollow First Addition.***