

CRIME PREVENTION FOR HOMEOWNERS

Every year there are hundreds of thousands of illegal entries into homes across America. They frequently result in burglaries, assaults, rapes, and sometimes -even death. Most illegal entries are crimes of opportunity. Burglars search for a home that can be easily, quickly and silently entered. Many homes can be made more secure with relatively little difficulty or expense. The following tips may help make your home less attractive to a prospective burglar.

BURGLARY PREVENTION TIPS

- 1.** If the doors have dead bolt locks, use them. If not, owners are advised to **have double cylinder dead-bolt locks** fitted on exterior doors. A burglar who enters through a window wants to carry stolen property out the door. A double cylinder dead-bolt lock makes this more difficult.
- 2.** With the installation of a good dead-bolt lock, consider installation of a **reinforced strike plate**. This will strengthen the doorframe. Use 2 ½" or 3" hardened steel screws to reach into solid wood studs behind the frame.
- 3.** In addition, **pinning door hinges** on all exterior doors will prevent the door from being removed even after removing the hinge posts. This is particularly important for doors that swing outward and have hinges exposed on the outside. To pin the door, remove two opposite screws on each hinge. Drive a sturdy headless nail into the screw hole in the doorframe, leaving a ½" protruding. Drill opposite the screw hole so that the nailhead fits in when the door is closed.
- 4.** When you leave home, even if only for a few minutes (e.g. walking your dog or going to the pool), **make sure that all doors and windows are locked**.
- 5.** **Sliding doors and windows** can be blocked with a break-in bar or lock pin. These devices make it more difficult to slide the door or window open, even if the lock is forced. The break-in bar or pin offers no protection from an intruder leaving with your household goods. Many products are available for securing sliding doors and windows. Ask your local hardware store to demonstrate the variety of locking devices.
- 6.** Many homeowners feel safer with **burglar bars**. However, most associations have restrictions or architectural guidelines dealing with any alteration to the exterior appearance of the property. Check your association's specific restrictions and comply with the necessary requirements prior to the installation of burglar bars. For better protection, burglar bars should be installed on the inside of windows using one way screws so that the burglar can't easily remove them. Be sure that there is a simple escape mechanism in the event of an emergency, such as a fire.
- 7.** If you have a lock up garage, **keep your garage door closed and locked**, whether you are at home or not. An open garage door is an invitation to burglars. The installation and use of an electronic garage door opener is also advisable.
- 8.** Marked personal property is difficult for a burglar to sell. If you **mark your personal property** it can be traced to the rightful owner with relative ease. If a burglar is caught with marked property, it is evidence of stolen goods. Several public libraries have engravers, which can be checked out in the same manner as a book. Your Texas driver's license number should be engraved on an area, which cannot be easily dismantled and is not easily seen. Once property has been marked and a list of the property is made, obtain and display the "Operation ID" sticker. The sticker may be obtained from the Houston Police Department. It also suggested that you video tape all valuables.
- 9.** Never leave notes that may inform a burglar that you are not at home or that your home is unoccupied.

10. Do not hide **keys** outside your home. Burglars know where to look. Leave a key with a trusted neighbor. Never leave the keys to your home with your car keys when your car is left in a parking lot or at a service station. Obtain a **pull apart key chain** or separate your keys.
11. When you leave town, don't advertise your absence. Arrange for someone to pick-up circulars, mail and newspapers. Use timers and photoelectric switches to turn light on and off.
12. Be alert in protecting not only your home but your **neighbor's** home as well. Don't tell a stranger that your neighbor is not at home. Leave information with a trusted neighbor as to where you can be contacted if necessary. Ask them to watch your home.

PERSONAL SAFETY TIPS

13. **Lock your windows and doors** when you are at home. Criminals often get into homes through open doors and windows. This especially includes your garage door.
14. Install a **peephole** with a wide-angle lens on exterior doors. This allows you to see who is outside your door without having to open the door to anyone you do not know. Remember that a burglar rarely looks like a burglar.
15. Always **acknowledge a caller at your door**, but do not open it. Speak to the person through the locked door to determine who they are and what they want. Some burglars ring the doorbell, and if there is no answer, they break in. You do not want that type of surprise company!
16. **Demand credentials** and phone for verification before admitting sales or repair personnel, particularly if you did not request their presence. Refuse to deal with any caller of this type who does not present satisfactory identification. Notify the police immediately.
17. **Do not reveal your name, phone number or address** to unknown callers. Never admit to them that you are alone or when you will be away from home. The caller may have called your number at random. Keep conversations to a minimum. If the caller is offensive, hang up.
18. Single women should only list their initials and last name on mailboxes and directories. Avoid the use of Miss or Ms.
19. **Walk purposefully and stay alert.** Communicate the message that you are calm, confident, know where you are going, and know what is going on around you. Stand tall and make quick, but deliberate eye contact with people around you.
20. **Avoid walking alone.** Stay away from dark streets. Avoid short cuts through deserted areas. Most muggers will be discouraged if you have company.
21. When **traveling by car**, always **lock all doors**. Keep the windows rolled up enough so that an arm cannot be inserted through the opening. If you think that someone is following you, do not go home. Drive to the nearest police or fire station, open gas station or other well lighted place where there are people to help you. Stop and honk the horn for attention.
22. **Park in well-lighted areas** and have your keys ready before you approach your car so that you don't make yourself vulnerable while searching for the right key. Glance into the back seat and floor of your car before you enter it to check for anyone who may be hiding inside.
23. Notify management of any **inoperative exterior lights**. Don't assume someone else has reported it.
24. In buildings with **locked entrance doors** and properties with **access control gates**, don't politely assist strangers to enter the property. Criminals "loaded down with two sacks of groceries" often gain access to properties by following behind residents.

REPORT SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITIES

No law enforcement department can function effectively without the assistance of concerned citizens. They depend on you to report any suspicious activities. Call the police – that is what they are there for. They'll appreciate your call. Don't worry about being embarrassed if your suspicions prove to be unfounded. Think instead of what could happen if you don't act. Some of the things to watch for and report are:

- A stranger entering your neighbor's house when your neighbor is not at home.
- Unusual noises, like a scream, breaking glass, or a loud explosive noise.
- Anyone peering into parked cars may be looking for a car to steal or for valuables left visible in the car.
- Strangers loitering around schools, parks, recreation facilities, or secluded areas in your community.
- If someone going door-to-door in your community tries to open doors or goes to the side or back door, especially if a companion appears to wait in front or is following in a car.
- Someone apparently trying to force entry into a home or vehicle, even if he's wearing a repairman's uniform.
- Vehicles being loaded with valuables if parked in front of an unattended residence, even if the vehicle appears to be a legitimate looking commercial vehicle. Many criminals customize their vehicles to look legitimate

Use common sense – **don't confront suspicious characters!** Call the police, they are trained professionals and know how to make arrests and gather the proper evidence to ensure successful prosecution. Have a camera handy to take photographs of suspicious characters or vehicles.

This information has been compiled by **Association Management, Inc.** to assist homeowners and residents in community associations help reduce the possibility of crime. Crime prevention is best achieved when everyone in the community works together toward the common goal of safe and secure community living.

Association Management, Inc. welcomes any suggestions you may have to improve crime prevention in your neighborhood. Serious consideration will be given to such suggestions by the Board of Directors of your community within the bounds of your association's responsibilities and its financial ability.

Association Management, Inc. established in 1979, is Houston's leading community association management company. Its primary concern is maximizing the quality of life in the communities in which it manages. Please report criminal incidents in your community to **Association Management, Inc.**, after the police have been notified. Statistics are kept and will assist your association in deciding on the appropriate response.

The suggestions contained in the pamphlet were taken from a number of publications provided by law enforcement agencies and public service oriented businesses. We acknowledge and thank them for their contribution.