

BURGLARY PREVENTION



Develop good security habits. Roughly one-third of all burglaries occur through unlocked doors and windows. You should establish a routine to follow before you leave home, such as making certain that all doors and windows are locked and alarm systems are turned on. In addition, don't hide house keys in obvious places, such as under doormats or on top of the doorframe.

Make sure exterior doors are strong. The doors to your home should be made of metal or solid hardwood and be at least one inch thick. It is also important that your door frames are constructed equally well and that the doors fit in their frames securely. A weak door or door frame renders a good lock useless. Add an extra lock for sliding glass doors to prevent them from being forced open or lifted off of their tracks.

Deadbolt locks offer the best protection. The cylinder (where the key is inserted) should be "pick resistant." Some deadbolts are locked with a key from the outside and a thumb turn on the inside. Others, known as double-cylinder locks, require keys on both the outside and the inside. If you install a double-cylinder lock, keep the key within reach of the door in case family members need to leave quickly due to a fire.

Lock your windows. You should lock your windows with key locks or other devices. It is also possible for you to pin the sashes of a double-hung window together by using a removable bolt.

Consider a burglar alarm. Security systems vary in cost, but often the price can be at least partially offset by discounts in your homeowner's premiums. So before purchasing an alarm system, check with your insurance company to see which alarm systems will get you a discount.

Keep your home well lit. When you go out for the evening, leave a few lights on in the house, and leave the outside lights on, too. Place outdoor motion-activated floodlights high out of reach so they can't be easily tampered with. Before going away overnight, put lights and a radio on automatic timers.

Vacation time means extra precautions. You don't want to signal your absence with a pile of newspapers on your stoop and an overflowing mailbox. Temporarily stop your newspaper and have the post office hold your mail until you return. In the spring and summer, have someone mow your lawn, while in the winter, have someone shovel snow from your driveway. If possible, you should ask a trusted friend or neighbor to stop by and check on your home while you're away.