

Burglary

If you're locked out of your home, can you still get in through an unlocked window in the back, or by using an extra key hidden under a flowerpot or up on a ledge?

If you can break in, so can a burglar! A small investment of time and money can make your home more secure and can reduce your chances of being a victim of burglary, assault, or vandalism.

Use the following tips to help secure your home:

- Secure sliding glass doors with commercially available locks or use a broomstick or wooden dowel in the track to prevent the door from being pried open.
- Secure double-hung windows by using key locks or by sliding a bolt or nail through a hole drilled at a downward angle in top corners of the inside sash and partway through the outside sash. Secure basement windows, too.
- Don't hide keys in mailboxes, planters, or under doormats. Give an extra key to a neighbor you trust.
- If you've just moved into a new townhouse or apartment, if it hasn't been done, have the locks changed.

Check the Doors:

- Make sure all exterior doors are metal or solid 1 3/4" hardwood.
- Doors should fit tightly in their frames with hinge pins on the inside.
- Install a peephole or wide-angle viewer in all entry doors, so you can see who is outside without opening the door.
- Secure garage doors with a padlock through the roller track.

Check the Outside:

- Trim shrubbery that hides doors or windows.
- Cut tree limbs that could help a thief climb into windows.
- Turn on outside lights after dark to illuminate porches, entrances, and yards.
- Consider using timers or motion detectors to activate lights.
- Keep up the appearance of the neighborhood.
- Report broken street lights to the Public Works Department, and abandoned cars to the police.

What about alarms?

- If you have valuables in your home, such as art, coin or stamp collections, furs, or fine jewelry, or if you live in an isolated area, you may want to consider an alarm system.
- Before you invest in an alarm, check with several companies and decide what level of security fits your needs. Check their references and use an established company. Learn how to use your system properly. If you continually set off false alarms, your neighbors will ignore the noise; and you could even be fined by the police department.

Additional Tips:

- Keep written records of all furniture, jewelry, and electronic products. If possible, keep these records in a safe deposit box, fireproof safe, or other secure place.
- Take pictures or videos of your property.
- Keep purchase information and serial numbers if available. This information will help police track recovered items.
- Consider theft insurance.

Burglars generally don't want to run into their victims. But if they're surprised by someone coming home, or if they pick an occupied home, someone may get hurt. If you see a screen that has been cut, a broken window, or a door that's been left open, **don't go in!** Call 9-1-1 from a neighbor's house or a public phone.

If you do hear a noise that sounds like someone breaking in or moving around, quietly call the police and wait calmly until they arrive, if you can leave safely, do so. Otherwise, lock yourself in a room or, if the intruder enters the room you are in, pretend to be asleep.

