

## Home Security

Burglary is mostly a crime of opportunity that capitalizes on the carelessness and neglect of the homeowner or renter. This section contains tips on preventing home burglaries, vandalism, and other property crimes by controlling access, providing visibility, and maintaining your property. It also contains tips on protecting your home and property when you are away. And if you do become a victim, it includes tips on making sure the police find your home and to identify your property. These tips can significantly enhance the security of your home and property.

### Controlling Access

The following tips suggest how access to your home, apartment, or condo can be controlled by physical protection, deterrent measures, burglar alarms, and various security procedures.

#### Physical Protection Measures Include the Following:

- Install single cylinder dead-bolt locks on all doors. Bolts should have a minimum throw of 1 inch. Strike plates should have screws that are at least 3 inches long.
- Doors should be solid hardwood or metal clad. Hinges should be located on the inside or have non-removable pins. Special locks are need on double and Dutch doors.
- Install locking devices on all sliding glass doors and windows.
- Install good locks all doors that lead outside through garages or storage areas.
- Don't rely on chain locks for security. They're only good for privacy.
- Re-key or change all locks when moving into a new home.
- Install locks on gates, garages, sheds, etc.
- Go to a locksmith or hardware store for advice on locks.
- Reinforce the glass in windows on the lock sides of doors so a burglar cannot break them and reach in to open the door.
- Consider installing security bars on side, rear, or other windows that a burglar might break to enter your home. Bars must comply with Fire Code requirements for inside release to permit an occupant to escape in the event of a fire.
- Fence in the yard.
- Install a good side-yard gate and keep it locked at all times. Side and back entries are the most common access points for burglars.
- Plant bushes with thorns or prickly leaves near windows and along fences.
- Trim trees so that limbs don't provide access to roofs, second stories, etc.
- Call the Union City Police Department at 770-306-6849 to arrange for a free home security survey.

#### Deterrent measures include the following:

- Put Neighborhood Watch, Alarm Company, and Operation ID stickers on entry doors and windows.
- Consider having a dog that can scare a stranger away by either barking or looking fierce. Keep an outside dog in a fenced area and have a good lock on the gate.

- Use fencing, gates, landscaping, pavement treatment, signs, etc. to define clear boundaries between your property and adjoining properties.

### **Security Procedures Include the Following:**

- Keep all doors and windows locked, even if you are just going out “for a minute.” If a window is left open a few inches for ventilation, pins or dowels should be inserted in the tracks to prevent someone from opening it more.
- Lock gates, garages, and sheds after each use.
- Store bicycles, mowers, etc. in a locked garage or shed, or secure them to some stationary point.
- Don’t leave notes on your door when you are away from home.
- Don’t leave keys in mailboxes or planters, under doormats, or in other obvious hiding spots.
- Leave an extra key with a neighbor.
- Learn to recognize who belongs in your neighborhood, development, or apartment, i.e., residents, workers, guests, etc.
- Know who’s at your door before opening it. Check photo registration card before dealing with any solicitors, peddlers, interviewers, etc.
- Be suspicious of persons making unsolicited offers of services.
- Post a NO SOLICITING sign if you don’t want any solicitor to ring your door bell, knock on your door, or make any other sound to attract your attention.
- Ask for photo identification before letting in anyone you don’t know. Check out the identification with the company or agency if you are suspicious.
- Never let a stranger enter your home to use the telephone. Offer to make the call yourself in an emergency.
- Don’t give your name, phone number, or whereabouts on your answering machine message. Never say you aren’t home. Just ask the caller to leave a message.
- Don’t leave your home keys on a chain with your vehicle keys when you use valet parking. Also, don’t leave your garage door opener where it is easily accessible.
- Keep your vehicle registration, proof of insurance, and any other papers with your home address on them where a criminal is not likely to find them.
- Don’t give maids, babysitters, or others working in your home access to your home keys or alarm codes.
- Call the police on **911** if you are at home and hear or see something suspicious.
- Don’t take direct action yourself. An officer will be dispatched to your address even if you cannot speak or hang up.
- Don’t go in or call out if you return home and suspect someone has broken into your home, e.g., if a window or screen is broken, a door is ajar, or a strange vehicle is parked in the driveway. Go to a neighbor’s home and call the police.
- Don’t discuss your assets or finances with strangers.
- Don’t keep large sums of money at home.
- Keep valuable papers, stocks, bonds, expensive jewelry, coin collections, etc. in a bank safe deposit box. Don’t store them at home unless you have a security closet or a safe that is well hidden and cannot be removed.

## **Providing Visibility**

- Leave outside lights on after dark or have outside lights controlled by a motion detector. Make sure there are no dark areas around the house, garage, or yard in which a person could hide. Street lights are generally inadequate for illuminating your property.
- Check lights regularly and replace burnt out bulbs.
- Trim bushes to less than 3 feet to eliminate possible hiding places, especially near windows and sidewalks.
- Trim tree canopies to at least 8 feet to allow visibility into your property.
- Replace solid walls in front yards with open fencing to eliminate hiding places and make climbing more difficult.
- Install a wide-angle peephole in your front door so you can look out without being seen yourself.

## **Maintaining Your Property**

- Keep property in good condition and free of trash, litter, weeds, leaves, graffiti, dismantled or inoperative vehicles, and other things that indicate neglect in caring for your property.
- Replace broken windows or screens.
- Repair broken fences and gate locks.
- Use screens, wired glass, or other protection for light fixtures and bulbs.
- Remove loose rocks and other objects that could be used to vandalize your property.

## **Protecting Your Home and Property When You Are Away**

- Use timers on lights, radios, TVs, etc. to make them go on and off during the day and night to make your home appear occupied.
- Stop mail and newspaper delivery, or have neighbor pick up anything left at the home.
- Keep grass watered and cut. Water and trim other landscaping.
- Ask the neighbors to watch your home and report any suspicious activities.
- Leave your itinerary with a neighbor so you can be contacted in an emergency.
- Disconnect your electric garage door opener and padlock the door, preferably on the inside.
- Visit or call the Union City Police Department to request vacation home checks when you'll be out of town.
- Set your burglar alarm and notify your alarm company that you will be away. Then if an alarm occurs when you are away the company will not call your home first to verify the alarm; it will notify the police directly. Also provide the alarm company with an up-to-date list of persons to contact about the alarm and the need to secure your home after a burglary.

## **Making Sure the Police Can Find Your Home**

- Make sure your street address number is clearly visible from the street and is well lighted at night so the police and other emergency personnel can locate your home easily. Numbers should be at least 4 inches high must be used on individual dwellings and duplexes, and 12 inches high on multiple-unit residential buildings.
- Make sure your unit number (in a multifamily housing development) is clearly visible from paths in the development. A directory or map that shows paths and unit locations should be placed at the main entrance of the development.
- Provide the police with an entry code if you live in a gated community.

## **Identifying Your Property**

- Etch your driver's license number or any personal identification Number you choose on any valuables that might be stolen.
- Photograph valuables that cannot be etched.
- Keep a detailed, up-to-date record of your valuables. Include type, model, serial number, and fair market value.