

PHYSICAL SECURITY

By increasing the physical security of your home, you increase the amount of force necessary to break in. The more force needed, the more time intrusion would take, and the more noise it would generate. The more time and noise involved, the more likely a burglar would be to choose a different target.

Door Security

Door security involves the lock, the construction of the door, the door jamb, and the door setting. Each of these is vitally important to overall door security.

The Lock

If you can lock an outside door by pushing in a doorknob button and closing the door (fig. 1), burglars can open it quickly and quietly with a flat, firm object, or by a variety of more sophisticated methods. The latches of these types of locks are generally short, and therefore, also susceptible to kick attacks. If not accompanied by a quality deadbolt lock, the key-in-knob lock alone is not considered adequate to provide sufficient residential security.

The "vertical bolt" (sometimes referred to as a "rim-lock") can be very effective (fig. 2). As with any style of lock, lower quality vertical bolt locks should be avoided. To be effective, the vertical bolt lock must be bolted through the door, rather than merely affixed with standard wood screws.

We recommend the deadbolt style lock for most home security applications. A quality deadbolt will have at least a 1" bolt extension and be of sturdy construction. There are two basic types of deadbolt locks⁺: single cylinder and double cylinder (fig. 3 and fig. 4). The single cylinder deadbolt requires a key to lock or unlock the door from the outside, but has a thumb turn lever on the inside. The double cylinder deadbolt requires a key to lock or unlock from either side of the door. If using a double cylinder deadbolt lock, it is essential to leave the key in the inside keyhole *WHENEVER* the home is occupied as a means of quick exit in an emergency. With regard to fire safety, the **only** double cylinder deadbolt we recommend is one which is equipped with a safety feature which does not permit the removal of the key from the inside keyhole if the deadbolt is locked from within.



⁺ See the *Door Setting* section for the applications of these two types of deadbolts.

Door Construction

A lock can provide only as much security as the door holding it in place.

Wooden "hollow-core" doors are weak, and provide little, if any, security. Only minimal force is necessary to collapse hollow-core doors, regardless of the style or quality of the lock. We strongly recommend the replacement of any hollow core exterior doors.

Most metal-cased doors provide far more resistance to force, and are preferable to hollow-core doors. However, many metal-case doors contain one or two seams along the edge of the door where the lock is in place. This seam may allow the door to crack and separate along the lock area if violent force such as a kick is applied to the door by an intruder. The splitting of the door in this region may permit the lock, regardless of the quality of the lock, to twist in such a fashion as to allow the opening of the door. Nonetheless, metal-cased doors are generally a great step up in security over wooden hollow-core doors.

Solid-core wooden doors generally provide reasonable security. However, considering that even solid-core doors are hollowed out near the lock and doorknob area (for installation of the deadbolt and knob), the added weakness may allow the door to crack and split near the lock if considerable force is applied from the outside. But by reinforcing the solid-core door (fig. 5), this problem is easily taken care of.

The Door Jamb

Even the best deadbolt lock, attached to the most sturdy of reinforced solid core doors, will not remain secure when attacked if the strike plate is not designed and installed for optimum security. The most common door vulnerability is in this area, but is often overlooked.

There are many varieties of strike plates that are designed for greater security. Hardware stores and locksmiths are good sources for information concerning the many options available (fig. 6).

Regardless of the chosen style, it is *essential* that the strike plate be installed with very long screws that extend *beyond* the molding and into the wall stud hidden behind the wall.

Door Setting

Panes of glass within 40" of the lock may provide burglars the opportunity to break the glass and reach in to unlock the door.

One option to safeguard against this type of intrusion is to replace these standard glass panes with break-resistant panes. (Glass companies offer a variety of alternatives to standard glass.) However, glass substitutes are usually costly and often have other disadvantages in appearance or care difficulties.

Another option is to install a double cylinder deadbolt lock, which requires a key to unlock the door from either side. If using a double cylinder deadbolt lock it is essential to leave the key in the inside keyhole *WHENEVER* the home is occupied as a means of quick exit in an emergency. With regard to fire safety, the **only** double cylinder deadbolt we recommend is one which is equipped with a safety feature which does not permit the removal of the key from the inside keyhole if the deadbolt is locked from within.

Window Security

Although the back door is the first choice of entry for most burglars, the second preference is generally a basement or ground floor window.

The latches on standard vertically or horizontally sliding windows can be quickly defeated by many burglars. "Pinning" these windows provides effective, simple security, and can be done easily:

1. Drill a hole (about 1/6" in diameter) at a slightly downward angle through the inside window frame and about 3/4 into the outside frame.
2. Insert a loosely fitting pin or nail into the hole (see fig. 7).



Simply remove the pin to "unlock" the window, and reinsert it to lock it. Also, by repeating this procedure with the window *opened* about 4" to 5", you can now "lock" the window partially open; wide enough to allow the free flow of air, yet not wide enough to allow an intruder the opportunity to crawl through.

When locked, cranking casement style windows are reasonably secure. But when unlocked, they can be pried open from the outside. In addition, the panes of unlocked casement windows have been broken from the outside and simply cranked open by a burglar reaching in. Keeping these windows locked usually provides reasonable security, but for extra security, you may choose to remove the crank (however, remember to keep it available nearby for quick use in an emergency).

The small basement "well windows" have been accessed by burglars also. They are difficult to secure, but many hardware stores and locksmiths can provide the information and/or equipment needed to adequately reinforce these windows.

Sliding Glass Door Security

The sliding glass door poses an intrusion risk if not properly secured. Rarely will a burglar risk the noise made by the breaking of the glass of a sliding glass door. But often these doors are equipped with relatively weak locks, and may be vulnerable to being either forced open or lifted off their tracks and removed. Their security can be enhanced by a combination of the following:

1. Drilling and pinning the overlapping frames (see fig. 7 and fig. 8);
2. The use of a "Charlie-bar" (see fig. 8);
3. Simply placing a stick or bar snugly into the bottom track;
4. The installation of a supplemental lock system (available in several varieties at many hardware stores and locksmiths).



Burglar Alarms

We know that burglars prefer to make as little noise as possible, and often abandon the intrusion attempt if they feel they have made too much noise trying to enter. If the noise caused by forced entry frightens some burglars off before intrusion has been successful, you can imagine the effect of the louder noises caused *indirectly* by the burglar.

A barking dog, for example, can be an effective "alarm." We are limited only by our own imagination. Some put sleigh bells on back doors; others have propped metal tools against infrequently used doors into the garage, so that they will fall and clang loudly onto the floor when the door is opened. Some parts of the military actually use **geese**, whose honking at suspicious persons is presumably more reliable than the barking of dogs!

There are many different types of burglar alarms, offering different types of protection. But as far as reliability is concerned, most electronic intrusion detection systems can be greatly effective. If properly installed according to actual need, and if utilized at all times the home is vacant, burglar alarms are always beneficial. This is not to say that every home *needs* a burglar alarm. In many cases physical security and proper lighting might be sufficient, thus the added expense of an alarm system may be difficult to justify.



On the other hand, there are three circumstances for which the use of a burglar alarm is highly recommended. These revolve around the questions of *distance*, *vacancy*, and *vulnerability*.

If the *distance* between your home and neighboring homes is so great that the noises of a forced intrusion attempt (breaking glass, the kicking of a door, etc.) would probably not be heard from a neighbor's home, or so great that view to your home from a neighboring home is not possible, then a burglar alarm system is highly recommended.

Or, if your home is *vacant* frequently or for long periods of time due to travel, a burglar alarm is also highly recommended.

We also suggest consideration of an alarm system if there are unusual door or window configurations that make higher security difficult or impossible; and thus leave these potential entrances *vulnerable* to relatively quick or quiet access.

If you decide to install an alarm system in your home, you will find that you have many options from a variety of companies. For instance, you can choose between a "do-it-yourself" system, or one that is professionally installed. You can choose to alarm the entire home, or limit the system only to the most vulnerable areas. You can go with one that links fire and smoke detection into the system, or merely detects intrusion. You will also get to choose from a wide selection of sensor types  from motion sensors to pressure mats hidden beneath the rug. You can determine for yourself what will work best in your home based on your informed concerns and your means.

But there is one strong recommendation we *will* make. Remember that your home contains your most prized possessions: yourself and your family members. Burglars rarely try to intrude while there is someone home, but that possibility still exists; or that you or a family member return home while the burglar is present. For unoccupied businesses, silent alarms that alert the police department, or an alarm company that contacts the police, are a good idea. In these cases the burglar may not realize an alarm has been activated until he is caught in the act. Our chances at apprehension and conviction are greater.

But your home is quite different than an unoccupied business. In every residential case, the *audible* alarm is preferred over any silent system. It's a fact that apprehension chances are reduced immensely if an audible alarm sounds during a burglary. The burglar will flee and usually will be far away by the time officers are notified and arrive. Don't be concerned about that. We'll deal with the burglar on another occasion. For the

moment, protect yourself and others in the home by causing the burglar to flee. In this regard, the louder the alarm system the better!

Here are some points to remember once the system is installed:

1. Make sure neighbors are aware of the alarm system, and instructed to call 911 *immediately, whenever* they hear the alarm.
2. Be sure that in the event the alarm sounds in your absence, the police department or an available neighbor knows who to contact to reset the alarm, as well as how you can be reached quickly.
3. Promptly correct any problem that has led to "false alarms."
4. Check the system frequently to detect potential malfunctions.
5. Utilize the system whenever the home is vacant.

Keeping Areas Open to View

As we discussed earlier, one of the fears a burglar experiences is the fear of being seen. Burglars rely heavily on seclusion, and often this seclusion could be removed beforehand by the resident. We create greater opportunity for the burglar when we create potential seclusion for him. Likewise, when we reduce potential seclusion we simultaneously reduce the opportunity for burglary.

Houses with connecting garages, darkened entryways, or thick shrubbery that obscures the view around basement or ground floor windows, can pose security difficulties. These difficulties can be overcome...



Shrubbery

Large bushes, or thick trees with low hanging branches, can create seclusion opportunities for burglars if they are located where they block view to windows. Burglars can use thick shrubbery to hide behind while attempting to defeat the security of a basement or ground floor window. By allowing thick foliage to grow near accessible windows, a situation is created that gives the burglar no need to rush his entry. While every burglar will spend a finite amount of time attempting intrusion before giving up, that time can be greatly lengthened when the burglar is aware that he is not in view from a neighbor's residence, or by traffic on the street and sidewalk.

Removal of any such obstruction to view is highly recommended.

Garages

Remember that the first choice of intrusion for burglars is the rear door. But it is important to note that "rear door" simply means "most secluded door." Realizing the desire of the intruder to enter through an entrance not open to public view, every effort should be taken to ensure that all entrances leading into the garage from the outside are as secure as possible.

The reason for this is simple. If there is a pass-door between your garage and house, access into your garage really means access into your house. Once inside your garage, a burglar has available to him all tools within the garage. Many of these tools are very capable of assisting with forced entry through virtually any household lock or door. And again, he is secluded from view from your neighbors, and will usually allow himself much more time.

Another thing to remember about the garage, whether connected to the house or not, is that any clear windows should be covered or "frosted." Window coverings disallow burglars the opportunity to peer in and determine the presence or absence of cars.

To keep the garage secure:

1. Turn off the electric garage door opener and manually lock the overhead door when leaving town for an extended period.
2. The walk-in doors of the garage (leading from the outside into the garage) should be every bit as secure as any other door leading into your home. (See *Door Security*.)
3. Windows of the garage should have curtains, shades, or other window coverings to obscure view from outside.
4. Garage windows should be as secure as possible. (See *Window Security*.)

Exterior Lighting

Exterior lighting is often underestimated in its security enhancement potential, and therefore, often underused.

The fact of the matter is that a good lighting system can be every bit as important to security as a good lock system. Burglaries don't always occur at night, but very often do. And when they do, it's usually because the burglar prefers the cover of darkness. The last thing the burglar wants is to be seen, so removing his cover through proper lighting techniques can actually keep most burglars away from your home.

Remember that burglars prefer rear or side entrances, so limiting lighting to the front of the home is not the best idea. Regardless of the lighting system you use, attention should be given to **every** entry.

There are many exterior lighting options available to you. One option is to effectively use existing standard porch lighting. Entryway lights are often sufficient to light vulnerable areas of the home. Simply leaving these lights on throughout the night is a very good idea. Brightness is important, but low wattage bulbs generally last longer, are inexpensive to use, and usually provide enough light to help motivate a burglar to try a darker target. Getting into the habit of leaving them on *every* night, even while the home is occupied, is a good idea. If these lights are on only in your absence, you may be signalling to the burglar that the home is empty. Also, remember that porch lights left on through the day can be a signal of an empty house. If leaving town, arrange to have them turned on at night, and off in the morning.

"Photo sensors" are convenient and can be added to existing lights very easily. They operate the lights for you, sensing the change from daylight to darkness and turning the lights on and off without your aid.

Another alternative is the replacement of standard light switches regulating exterior lights with timed switches. You simply determine at what time you want the exterior lights to come on and go off, and set the timer accordingly. Both photo sensor lights and timed switches provide the advantage of functioning normally even in your absence.

For many applications, motion detector lights are often the best alternative regarding security lighting. Motion detectors sense the presence of movement and respond by immediately switching the lights on. They turn themselves off after a period of time predetermined by the user. The potential burglar realizes one of two things as the lights come on: either someone has seen or heard him and turned on the light; or, if he realizes the light is a motion detector light, he is aware that the radical change from darkness to light may have been noticed by someone who will soon be looking to determine the cause. In either case, the intruder is likely to leave the area immediately.

Whichever you decided to use, a good lighting system can enhance the security of your home. Everything else being equal, a burglar will choose a home with darkened entrances over a well-lit home.

REPORTING SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY

We Need You!

After many residential burglaries, neighbors have informed us that they heard or saw something suspicious at the time of the burglary, or shortly before. Perhaps someone was lingering between houses, an unfamiliar vehicle passed by very slowly several times at a peculiar hour, breaking glass or a loud crashing sound was heard, or there was continuous barking of a neighbor's dog. It's probable that as many as 50% of our burglaries would have never taken place had we been informed immediately when suspicious activity was noticed.

There are as many explanations why the police are *not* called as there are reasons *to* call. "I didn't want to bother the police." "I wasn't absolutely sure that a crime was actually occurring." "I didn't want to look foolish if nothing was really wrong." "I might have just imagined that noise." "If it's really a problem, someone else will call." "I didn't want to get involved." "The police will think I'm just paranoid." If you have ever thought anything like this while contemplating calling the police, you are among many! But the truth of the matter is that we *need* to hear from you to respond.

Anything that occurs in your neighborhood which *seems* suspicious to you *is*, in fact, suspicious. It doesn't matter whether anyone else, including the police department, perceives it the same way. Because it's *your* neighborhood, no one is better qualified to determine what is suspicious around your neighbors' homes than you are. If you don't call, it's likely that no one will. And if no one calls, we don't come. We want your call. We **need** your call!

Reporting to the Police



Use **911** in any emergency or urgent situation. If you are unsure whether a particular situation warrants the use of 911 or the non-emergency police number, use 911.

If you have a programmable phone, it's a good idea to program both 911 and the non-emergency police number (356-5275) into the phone for quick access.

Emergency 911 Procedure

Give the 911 operator your name, address, telephone number, and a brief description of what you actually see and hear. The operator will ask questions to learn additional details necessary to emergency response, or immediately transfer your call to another emergency agency if needed. If you have information you feel could be pertinent but haven't been asked about it, give those details as well. Be specific, and do not exaggerate the circumstances.

Stay on the line until instructed otherwise by the 911 operator. It is not necessary for you to hang up before the police can be dispatched, and if you can stay on the line while still monitoring the suspicious individual, you can be the "eyes" of our department during the initial stages of our response.