



Neighborhood Watch
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Anonymous tips can be
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RESIDENTIAL BURGLARY PREVENTION

July 2014

Residential burglary is defined as the unlawful entry of a residential structure with the intent to commit a crime, usually a theft. Although burglary is a non-confrontational property crime that is usually committed when the offender thinks no one is home, it can leave a victim feeling vulnerable and violated. In order to prevent this crime, it is important to first gain an understanding of who commits burglaries and why.

There is no one typical burglar, but many share common traits. Burglars may operate alone, in pairs or as part of an organized group or gang. Most burglars are motivated by the need to obtain quick cash or drugs. They tend to target property that is portable, valuable and can easily be converted to cash and/or readily exchanged for drugs. Favorite items include small electronic devices such as iPods or MP3 players, cell phones, laptop computers, and video players. Most of these items can be easily transported in a common back pack.

Why my property?

Although home burglaries may seem random in occurrence, they actually involve a selection process. Burglars generally pick targets based on a number of key factors.

Location:

- Some burglars target homes close to where they live.
- Burglars may target multiple homes in a specific geographic area – on a block or in a specific neighborhood.
- By comparison with non-burglarized houses, houses previously targeted are more likely to be burglarized. Burglars may return to houses for property left behind during the initial burglary or months later, to steal property the owners have replaced. They also tell other burglars about desirable houses.

Occupancy:

The majority of home and apartment burglaries occur during the daytime when most people are away at work or school. Most burglars do not target occupied houses. Those that appear occupied – with the lights on, a vehicle in the driveway, visible activity, or audible noises from within – are less likely to be burglarized. Burglars routinely ring doorbells to confirm residents' absence. If someone answers the door, they say that it is a mistake and they are looking for a particular individual or a nearby address. Your home will be more vulnerable if it is vacant for extended periods of time. Signs of vacancy such as open garage doors, accumulated mail or newspapers and overgrown lawns may indicate that no one is home.

Visibility or Surveillance:

A burglar's risk of being seen entering or leaving a property influences target selection, making the following houses more vulnerable to burglary:

- Houses with cover. For prospective burglars, cover includes features that obscure views of doors and windows including trees, shrubs, walls and fences.
- Houses that are secluded. Secluded houses are isolated from view by being set back from the road, sited on large lots or next to nonresidential land, such as parks. Seclusion reduces the chance that neighbors or passerby will see or hear a burglar.
- Houses with poor lighting. Poor lighting, especially around entry points, reduces a burglar's visibility to neighbors.

Accessibility:

- Houses easily entered through side or back doors and windows. Side or back entries are the most common access point for burglars. Alleys provide both access and escape for burglars, and limited visibility to neighbors.
- Houses near major thoroughfares. Suspicious activity is harder to identify with more vehicle and pedestrian traffic in the area.

Vulnerability or security:

How vulnerable or secure a house is determines how likely a burglar is to target it. The following houses are particularly at risk:

- Houses with weakened entry points. Poor building materials can make houses more vulnerable to burglary. Older houses may have rusting, easily compromised locks or worn and decaying window and door frames, while newer houses may be built with cheap materials.
- Houses whose residents are careless about security. Burglarized houses often have unlocked or open windows or doors. Seasonal variations may determine burglars' access methods – summer months allow entry through open windows or doors, while winter months bring an increase in forced entry.
- Houses with few or no security devices. Studies show that alarms, combined with other security devices, reduce burglaries. Burglars are less likely to gain entry when a house has two or more security devices (including window locks, deadbolts, security lights, and alarms).

Steps to Burglary Prevention:

When it comes to burglary prevention, you can reduce the likelihood of your home becoming a target if you take steps to increase the risk of detection to the offender, increase the level of difficulty required to gain access to your home and valuables, and reduce the perceived rewards of committing the crime.

- Report suspicious activity to the police. You can contact 9-1-1 when what you observe appears to be a threat to life or property. If the activity doesn't fall under the category, contact the non-emergency number at 618-667-6731. When in doubt, it's okay to start with 9-1-1.
- Never leave a house key in an obvious place outside such as under a doormat or flower pot.
- Remove keys and garage door openers from your vehicles, especially those parked outside. Do not include your address on your keys.
- Lock doors and windows, including garage doors. This includes the door to your attached garage. During summer months, use secondary locks to secure windows in unattended rooms. Talk to your children about the importance of locking up.
- Look into improving the security hardware of your home to fortify entry points.
- Eliminate areas that reduce the visibility of your property, especially those areas that block entryways and windows. Dense bushes and low hanging trees need to be trimmed and limbed up. Architectural features that may make it difficult for neighbors to observe what's happening on your property may need to be altered. Blocked visibility makes it difficult for neighbors to identify and report suspicious activity.

Steps to Burglary Prevention Continued:

- Install motion-sensing, dusk to down, or other lighting that illuminates the perimeter of your property. Lights should illuminate what you are trying to protect; they should not be pointed outward towards neighbors' houses.
- Install locks on gates. Solid fences create a concealment area for offenders. Unlocked gates provide them easy access to an area where neighbors and bystanders can't observe activity.
- Do not leave tools or climbing devices out such as ladders, storage containers, and outdoor furniture that allow someone to gain access to your home. Drain pipes and trellises have also been used to gain access.
- Block visibility to valuables such as electronics and jewelry in the home by covering windows, or move valuables out of sight of windows.
- Create an appearance of occupancy. Residential burglaries happen during the day when residents are gone to school or work. Making it appear that someone is home during these times can be a deterrent. Some things that you can do every day include leaving lights and television or radios on. When you are on vacation, stop the delivery of mail and papers, arrange to have your lawn mowed and garbage cans put out for collection, and set lights and radios on timers. Make sure that your answering machine does not indicate that you are not home or out of town. This would include your status on social media also.
- If you have a security alarm, make sure that the system is properly installed based on the typical activities of your family and pets. You and your family members should know how to use the system without triggering a false alarm. Consistently use your alarm.
- Keep an inventory of your valuables stored in a fire safe container. Information such as serial numbers, description, make and model, and fair market value are important information to supply to the police to increase the chance of recovery and can be used to submit to your insurance company. If valuables do not have a serial number or identifier, engrave and etch a driver's license number on the items. Take pictures of jewelry and artwork.

What to do if your home has been burglarized:

- Report the crime to the police. Call 9-1-1 to report a crime in progress. If the residential burglary has already taken place, call the non-emergency number at 618-667-6731.
- In the event you observe the suspects, write down any details, activities, and/or modes of transportation used by the suspect(s) right after the crime is noticed, while the details are fresh in your memory. This may include a description of the person and license plates and vehicle information.
- Talk to your neighbors about what happened. It is important to share information with others so they are aware of any criminal activity in the area. They may also be able to provide you with additional information about the incident.

Additional Resources:

How to obtain a case number: The officer will provide you with a case number at the time of report.

How to get a copy of a police report: Call the Troy Police Records Division to obtain copies by calling 618-667-6731.