

# UNINVITING BURGLARS

Burglars, thieves, and muggers are opportunists. They're always looking for little things such as:

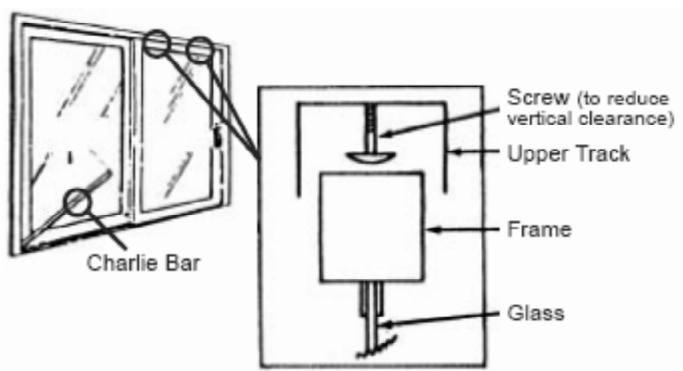
High bushes around doors, windows, or garages to hide behind; Open doors or windows for easy access; An inviting open garage door; An accumulation of flyers & newspapers; Little or no lighting around entryways and garages; Empty big-ticket-item boxes on the curb; A darkened house indicating nobody is home.

## Fight back:

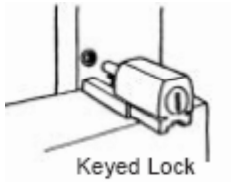
- Keep a written inventory of your property along with photos or videotape. Store the list along with the pictures/video in a secure place away from the house such as a safety deposit box. Include a description of each item, receipts, and any serial numbers (helpful for insurance/recovery identification). Keep the list updated. Mark your valuable property with a code in an inconspicuous spot using indelible ink or an etcher.
- Many police departments offer a free home security inspection.
- Don't keep all your valuable jewelry in one easy-to-find place. Hide the pieces in various places. Burglars don't have time to search everywhere.
- Burglars and muggers hate light. Have all entrances to your home and garage well lit with fixtures out of reach from ground level. Install lights with motion sensors (*be aware they may give false alarms*). An alternative is photocell controlled lighting. The lights come on at dusk and stay on until dawn and only cost pennies per month.
- If you have an electrical or fuse box mounted outside, secure it with a strong lock.
- Muggers and burglars don't like working out in the open. If you have bushes or shrubs near any windows or doors, trim them down to clear the view from windows and trim them up 1-2 feet from the ground to eliminate potential hiding places. Trim shrubs around the garage doors. High fences also protect burglars from being noticed.
- There are many fine wireless or wired-in alarms and alarm systems on the market in a variety of price ranges. You could purchase a D-I-Y system or have a professional install one for you. Wireless systems run on batteries and will continue working during a power outage. Some wired in systems connect you to a central monitoring center through your phone line and have a monthly monitoring fee. There are many fine security monitoring companies. If you contract with a security company, be aware that some police departments have chosen not to respond to unverified calls from the company due to potential false alarms. If you are unable to invest in an alarm system, you can put alarm warning stickers on doors and windows.

***Remember, an alarm system can't help you if you don't turn it on!***

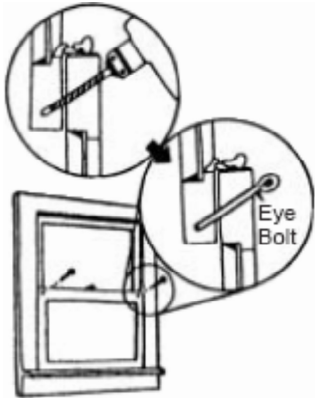
- If you have recently moved into a new home or apartment, change all the locks on every door, including the garage. If there is a remote for the garage, change the code. Be sure to change all locks if your keys are lost. Don't use ID tags on your keys.
- Keep all doors and windows locked at all times, even if you're in the back yard.
- Make sure any ladders and hand tools (burglar's helpers) are safely locked away.
- Make sure your street number is easily seen to help police and fire personnel in case of emergencies.
- Never leave your garage unlocked. If you go on vacation, put a lock on the garage door track. Secure the garage windows the same as you would your house windows.
- Make sure all entry doors are either metal or at least 1 3/4" thick solid wood. There should be no more than 1/8" clearance between the door and frame.
- Install a peep hole/wide-angle-viewer at a height convenient for everyone in the house. Don't rely on door handle locks. Experienced thieves can easily open these. Don't rely on chain locks. They can be easily cut or pulled out.
- Install deadbolt locks in all outside doors. Make sure the lock has at least a 1" bolt or throw. If you already have a deadbolt, check the length of the kick plate screws. These screws should be at least 3" long to go into the frame. If there is a window next to or in the door, use a double cylinder deadbolt (requires a key from each side). That way, a burglar can't break the window to gain access to the deadbolt lock. Keep the key nearby but accessible only to your family for emergency use.



Patio sliding doors are particularly susceptible to break-ins. Use anti-slide bolts or a track bar to reduce track clearance.



For double hung windows, you can purchase locks & clamps that attach to the windows to restrict movement.



An alternative is pinning. Drill a down-angled hole through both windows and insert an eyebolt or pin having a head. This is for emergency removal. Drill a second hole no more than 4 inches lower and the window may be opened for air circulation yet not allow access.

- Louvered windows allow easy access since the panes are easily removed. Replace them with a more secure window type. The most secure basement windows are made of glass block. Before changing your basement windows, check fire codes and be aware of emergency exits.
- Exterior air conditioners should be securely mounted on the inside of the window frame. If possible, remove the air conditioner in cold weather.
- Your home should appear occupied at all times. When you leave the house, make sure all your windows and doors are secure. Keep a light or two turned on or a radio on or put them on a timer. Turn your answering machine volume down.
- Never leave a note for delivery persons on your door.
- If you have an alarm system, remember to turn it on! If you have a babysitter, make sure they know how to arm/disarm the alarm system.
- At night, close your curtains or pull your shades.
- Never leave a key outside under a welcome mat, above a doorway, etc. Those are the first places burglars will look.
- When you arrive home, if you suspect someone is inside your garage or house, **DON'T GO IN!** Get away quickly and go to a neighbor's house and call the police.

- When someone comes to your door, use your peep-hole viewer. Have your deadbolt lock engaged until you can verify the identity of the person on the other side of the door. Utility employees carry ID cards. Don't hesitate to call the company to verify information.
- **NEVER - UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES** let someone in to "just use the phone". Offer to make the call for them. Make sure your children and babysitters understand they should never let anyone in the house without your permission. Have them call you if there is any question.
- Should someone come to your door late at night, answer the door. No need to let someone inside, but you're showing a potential thief someone is home. Don't hesitate to mention that you are not alone and "a friend or relative is sleeping in the other room".
- When you are on vacation, make your house look lived in. Notify your local police or sheriff (most departments will make an occasional *drive-by*). Ask a neighbor or friend to pick up your papers, mail, and flyers. Have someone take care of your lawn and/or snow shoveling. Hide your garbage cans. Leave a key with a friend or neighbor so they can occasionally change drapery positions. Have someone park their car in your driveway. Put two or more light timers in separate rooms set at different times (this indicates movement).
- Birthdays, anniversaries, and holidays are happy times, but they can cause unintended problems. If you leave the empty TV, VCR, computer, or other boxes or packaging from expensive gifts on the curb, you are displaying some of a burglar's favorite items. If the boxes won't fit in your recycling container, consider taking them to a recycler yourself.
- If you wish to have your name on your mailbox, consider using only your first initial with your last name.
- If you are having a garage sale, make sure you have at least one helper to keep an eye on your items and money. Make sure your house is locked. Never carry more than a few dollars in your cash box.
- If you have telephones in more than one room, you will have one handy at all times. When setting up your answering machine or voicemail, never leave a message saying "We're not home". Instead, just say "We're busy" or "We're unavailable". Use "we" instead of "I". Don't give your full or last name in the message. Either give your number ("This is 555-1212") or give only your first names ("This is John & Jane"). Single women may wish to have a male friend leave the message (men's voices still have an effect). You can also use the machine's pre-recorded message.
- Make sure children and babysitters **NEVER** tell a caller they are alone. Have them say "My parents can't come to the phone right now".
- **NEVER** volunteer any information to unknown callers. Never give your name, address, or any bank or credit card numbers to someone calling you unless you know them personally. If you're unsure, *Just don't!*

- Buy a dog. No need to get a trained attack dog. No need to get a huge dog. No need for a pure-bred dog. A dog can be a first-rate burglar deterrent. As an added bonus, dogs also make wonderful companions. To find the best fit for your family and home, stop by your local Humane Society. If you are unable to have a dog, buy a leash and hang it outside the back door. NOTE: Experienced burglars know some dogs can be distracted by food.
- If you decide to have guns for protection, there are several things you need to consider: For your children's protection, you should have the guns locked away in a cabinet or at least fitted with a trigger guard. Ammunition should be kept in a separate secure area. With that in mind, how much time do you think you would have to arm yourself should you hear a noise?  
*Even for people with no small children at home, police statistics indicate a 4-5 times greater chance of you being harmed by your own weapon!*
- If you live in a secure apartment building, never let anyone in unless you are personally expecting them. Never let someone in because they "know someone there" or if "they are doing work for someone". If there are any problems with the building security, contact the manager/owner immediately!

In our grandparents day, people knew everyone in their neighborhood. Over the years that has changed. Now, some families barely have time to see each other, let alone get to know their neighbors. Joining a blockwatch is a great way to meet your neighbors. You can find out what good/bad things are going on in your neighborhood. Problems are much easier to solve when you have input from many people. There is strength in numbers! A blockwatch should have a good working relationship with their alderperson and the police department. Knowing your neighbors and the normal neighborhood activities gives you the advantage over strangers. As a bonus, you may make a new friend or two! If you see something you know is wrong, don't hesitate to call for help. If there is no blockwatch in your neighborhood, your local police department can provide information and instructions for starting your own.

## **REMEMBER**

**IF SOMETHING FEELS SUSPICIOUS, IT PROBABLY IS!  
NEVER DISCOUNT YOUR "6<sup>TH</sup> SENSE".**

Stay safe,  
Jim & Deb