

# **Residential Burglary Prevention**

Residential Burglary continues to be a priority in our neighborhoods. This booklet is designed to provide the homeowner with tips and techniques to better secure their homes, to help make our neighborhoods a safer place to live.



Compliments of:

City of Tacoma Crime Prevention Programs,  
The Washington State Crime Prevention Association,  
Seattle Children's Hospital Security Services,  
Safe Streets and Hilltop Action Coalition.



**Crime Prevention** is a collaborative effort between citizens, community groups and law enforcement agencies.

Starting a Block Watch Program is a step toward ensuring your own safety. Block Watch communities have proven to be a deterrent to criminal activity. Criminals want to be able to victimize without being caught, and strong community action forces them to seek other, more vulnerable areas to target.

The City of Tacoma Crime Prevention Program, Safe Streets of Pierce County, The Tacoma Hilltop Action Coalition, and the Washington State Crime Prevention Association, can all provide information and training on how to start a Block Watch in your community. Training can also be provided on topics such as: personal safety, car prowling and auto theft prevention, identity theft, home security and disaster preparedness.

By working together, we can make our city safe, clean, livable and crime resistant.



## Burglary

The crime of Burglary is defined as the act of entering a building or other premises with the intent to commit theft.

All homes are at risk of being victimized by burglary; however, those that provide criminals with the opportunity to sneak onto the premises undetected, or that allow easy access with poor security fixtures or an open or unlocked door or window, are at a higher risk of being targeted.

There are four primary strategies you can employ to minimize the burglar's opportunity to commit this crime at your home:

1. Physical Security
2. Alarms
3. Block Watch
4. Operation Identification

This booklet will explain all of those strategies in depth.

## Physical Security

Time, noise and light are a burglar's worst enemy. With a little effort, you can set up deterrents against possible danger, injury to people or damage to property. By anticipating the opportunity and taking proper preventative action, it is possible to effectively "harden the target" and discourage most burglars from attempting a break-in.

Included in the following pages are steps that you can take to improve the security of your home. Many of these suggestions are inexpensive and some can be done yourself.



## Physical Security

### **Interior Lighting**

Keep some interior lights on when you are away from home. This creates the appearance that someone is home. Use a timer to turn the lights off and on at normal hours. A radio set to a talk station and kept playing makes it sound like someone is in the house, and adds to the illusion that the home is occupied.

### **Alarms**

Many types of alarm systems work well to protect homes. The system should be individually tailored to suit the needs of the residents. Consult your local Crime Prevention Coordinator at (253) 591-5048, for alarm tips.

### **Windows**

Windows should have auxiliary locking devices. Keep your windows closed and locked when you are away. Screens and storm windows should be securely fastened to the structure.

### **Landscaping**

Lush landscape provides hiding places for criminals to lurk while breaking into your home. Prune bushes down to two feet in height and limb the lower branches of trees up at least 6 feet from the ground.

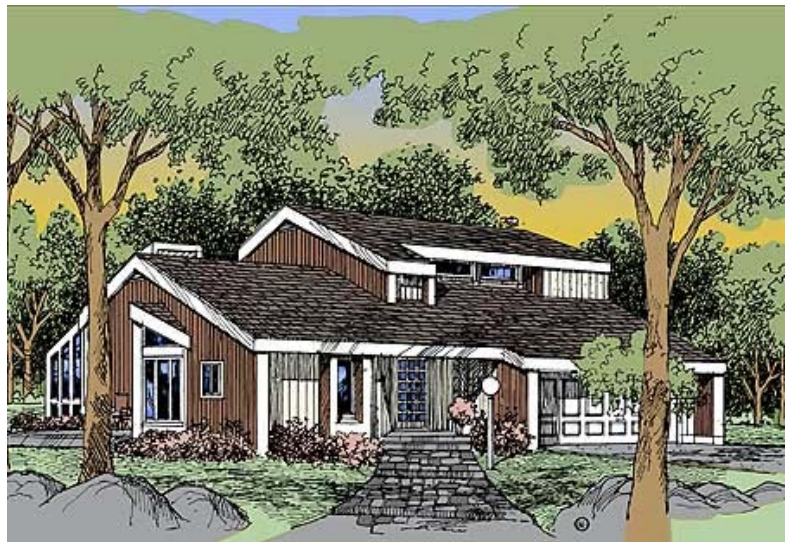
### **Exterior Doors**

Install solid-core wood or metal doors with rugged frames that cannot be spread apart with a pry bar. Install a single cylinder deadbolt with a one inch throw, in addition to the key-in-the-knob lock. Use a wide angle viewer to observe

visitors. Reinforce strike-plates and hinges with 3" screws.

### **Garage Doors**

Always keep them closed and locked. A burglar in your garage has access to tools to steal and ladders that can be used to gain entry onto the 2nd floor. Reinforce a door leading from the garage into the house the same as you would



your front door, with a dead-bolt lock, peephole and 3" screws in the hinges and strike-plate. Change the security code from the factory-setting of all garage door openers.

### **Exterior Lighting**

A 40 watt light at each entrance, including the garage, will provide you with both safety and security. Leave these lights on during the hours of darkness. Photo-sensitive lights that automatically turn on and off during the hours of darkness are a great tool to provide lighting in obscured areas.

## Physical Security

### **Other Tips:**

- Address numbers need to be large and visible from the street and alley; preferably under a light source to aid emergency responders in finding your house should you need to call 9 1 1. If you have a house with an alley that runs behind it, put your address numbers on the back of the house, or on any garage that faces the alley, as well.
- Use gravel or lava-rock around your home instead of beauty bark. Gravel makes noise when stepped on, while beauty bark is silent. Crunching gravel can alert you to a trespasser outside.
- Plant sharp and thorny bushes in vulnerable spots like under windows and around exterior doors.

## Locks

Locks are the first line of defense against intruders. No one would argue with this statement. But too few homeowners know if the locks on their premises provide any reasonable degree of protection against thieves. It has often been said that “the average lock is designed to keep out honest men.” Locks on the market today range from bad to excellent in their protective qualities. Therefore, it is important to know which locks work and which ones do not.

No lock, no matter how good, can make a house, store, office or factory burglar-proof. However, good locks can be an effective deterrent and can make the difference between the burglar considering your premises easy or difficult to enter... and the more difficult it is, the less likely he is to try or to succeed.

### **Primary Locks**

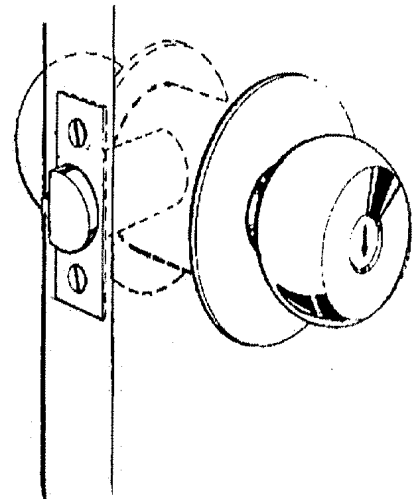
#### **Key-in-Knob Locks**

These locks have the cylinder in the knob and are commonly called cylindrical locks.

Extra force on the knob can defeat the locking mechanism. In most cases, cylinders are not designed with pick-resistant features. Keys can be readily duplicated.

Two kinds of latches are common to these locks – the spring latch and the deadlocking latch.

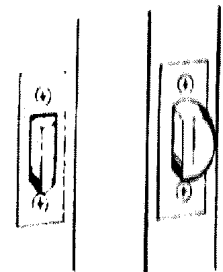
*Minimum security is provided.*



#### **The Spring Latch**

Since the bolt is spring-operated, it can be pushed out of the striker plate by inserting a piece of plastic (credit card), thin metal or wire between the door and frame. The bolt can also be held back by tape or the hole in the striker can be stuffed with wadding.

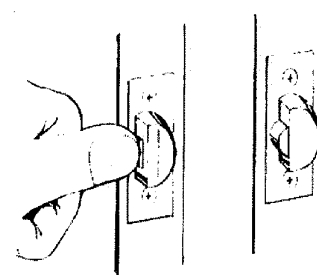
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### Dead Latch Bolts

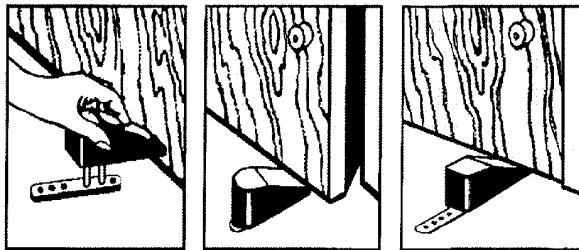
This is identical to a standard latch bolt in operation but when the door is shut, the latch becomes 'dead,' the spring action having been blocked by a lever operated by a 'pin' beside the bolt. This 'pin' is depressed by part of the striker plate when the door is shut. Very little force may be required to move the bolt out of the striker.

*Security: Minimal*



### Door Wedge

A wedge is inexpensive and when two steel pins are inserted into the floor place, the door may be opened a few inches. The pins prevent the wedge from slipping if force is applied to the door from the outside. When not in use, it stores in a convenient holder. This type or a wedge with a non-skid surface instead of a pin may also be useful for bedroom doors. Also consider putting an extension phone in the bedroom for emergencies.



## Auxiliary Locks

### Deadbolts

The deadbolt gets its name from the fact that it does not move (is 'dead') except with a key or thumb turn. It cannot be slipped with a card or tool because it has no spring attached. This means that to lock a deadbolt, you must use a key from the outside. If you pull your door shut and walk away, your deadbolt is not locked and your house is not secure. Remember to lock when you leave. There are a few things you should check when selecting a deadbolt lock.



Deadbolt, exterior door view.

The "bolt" should be no less than 1" when fully extended and should retain part of the bolt within the mechanism of the lock. This ensures some degree of strength where the bolt and mechanism meet.

The outside collar surround the cylinder should be of a substantial construction, i.e. not a thin alloy that can be easily crushed or ripped open. "Slip rings" are a feature of some slightly more expensive models. They allow the collar to rotate freely. This prevents the cylinder from being twisted off with vice grips or a pipe wrench.

It is important that a suitable strike plate be attached to the frame to ensure a strong anchor point for the bolt to sit in.



Deadbolt, interior door view.

This lock is available with a double cylinder (key required to lock it from the inside as well as the outside). This is recommended for commercial applications only, not residential. Many fire prevention professionals warn that double-cylinder deadbolts create a health hazard in the event your family must flee the home quickly to avoid fire.

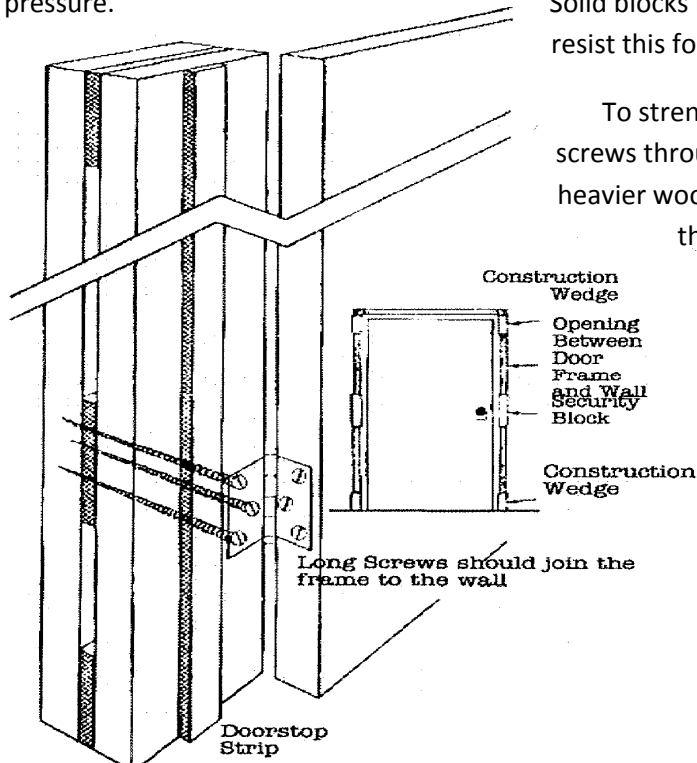
## Door Frames

A lock is only as strong as the door to which it is attached. Outside doors should be of a solid-core construction.

Even the best locks and doors can be defeated by a burglary method known as spreading, where either a wedge or a jack-like device is inserted between the two door frames. These methods can often be successful because doors and frames are purchased as single units and are placed into the wall opening provided by the builder during construction.

Although the opening between the wall and frame is braced at the top and the bottom with alignment wedges, the midsections are often left open, thus permitting the frame to bow under pressure.

Solid blocks inserted between these openings will help to resist this form of attack.



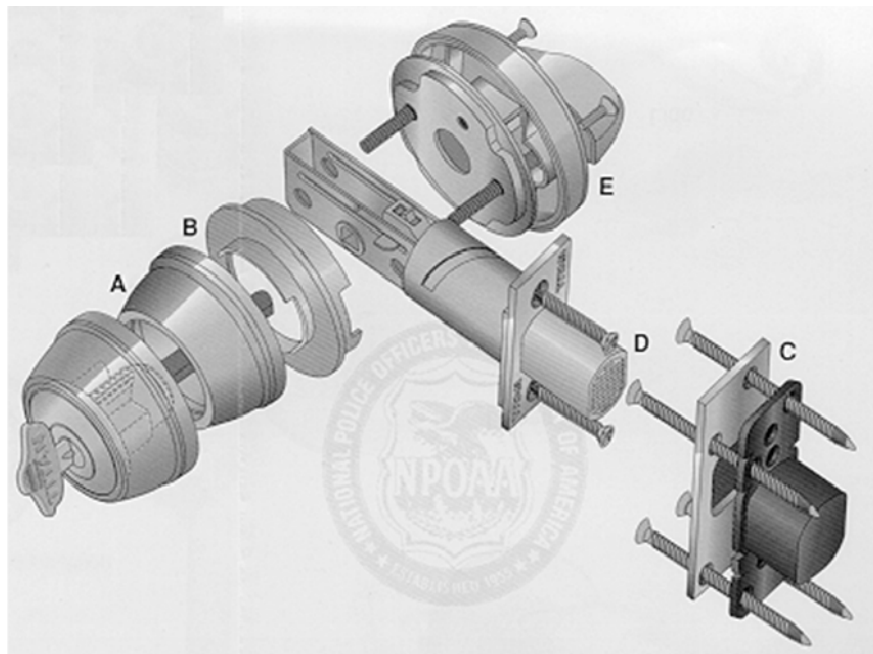
To strengthen the frame, install large (3-4 inches) screws through the doorstop strip and the frame and into heavier wood of the wall construction. The screws pull the door frame and the doorstop strip tightly against the wall's 2' by 4's. Put such screws on the hinge side also to further reduce a burglar's ability to spread the door and frame.

If appearance is a concern, drill a shallow hole slightly larger than the screw head so the screw can be recessed and fill the depression with patching compound.

Then sand and paint.

## Deadbolt Lock Mechanism

- A Free spinning cylinder guard prevents wrench attack.
- B Solid metal shield resists hammer and pry attacks.
- C Steel strike-plate and 3" screws resist kick-in attacks.
- D 1" dead-bolt resists sawing and spreading.
- E Extra large turn piece complies with ADA





## **Hinges**

Check to see if the screws in the hinge leaves are small screws. If so, replace them with larger screws. Where possible, use screws at least 3 inches long to go into the wall stud beyond the frame. When using larger screws, first drill a pilot hole slightly larger than the screw shank to prevent splitting the frame.

## **Exposed Hinges**

Most exterior doors in homes and apartments open inward with the hinges on the inside. This arrangement protects the hinges from tampering. If your door opens outward, you must make sure that your exposed hinges are secure.

If your hinges are the kind from which pins cannot be removed, your exposed hinges are secure. If, however, the exposed hinge-pins can be removed, then you should consider changing hinges to the non-removable, commercially-pinned type.

Alternatively, drill a matching hole in each leaf or remove a matching screw from each. Into one hole, insert a screw that is  $\frac{1}{2}$ " longer than the hole is deep into the door leaf. Cut off the screw-head with a hacksaw. Now when the door closes, the headless screw will fit into the hole on the opposite leaf and hold the door to the frame even with hinge pins removed.

## **Strikers**

When considering a "deadbolt" as an auxiliary lock, it is often forgotten that, although this improves the means of locking the door, there still remains a weakness in the door frame to force applied to the door.

A metal strike is installed on or in the door frame and is intended to house and protect the bolt of the lock. A typical strike is shown opposite and is often fastened with  $\frac{3}{4}$ " screws. Install at least 3" screws.

Most standard strike plates are small and are installed with short screws. It is important that the desired measure of security is not compromised. Therefore, an extended strike plate should be added to the frame to complement a good deadbolt. These extended strike plates are available from locksmiths or your local hardware store, in 8" or 12" sizes, and when attached with 2  $\frac{1}{2}$ " to 3" screws, add a substantial degree of strength to the frame. A high security box-type strike installed with 2  $\frac{1}{2}$ " to 3" screws through the door jam and into the wall stud will offer a strong housing for the bolt of a deadbolt lock.

## **Exterior Doors**

Exterior wooden doors should be solid-core but some may be hollow-core. Test yours by knocking on them. If a door sounds hollow, you have a door made of two thin wood panels filled with cardboard, styrofoam or fiber filler. It is easy to punch or cut a hole through a hollow-core door and reach the lock inside.

Replace the hollow-core or window door with a solid-core door. (Hollow-core doors are not suitable for exterior use in any case.) Or better still, a steel door with suitable hardware will provide both security and better insulation.

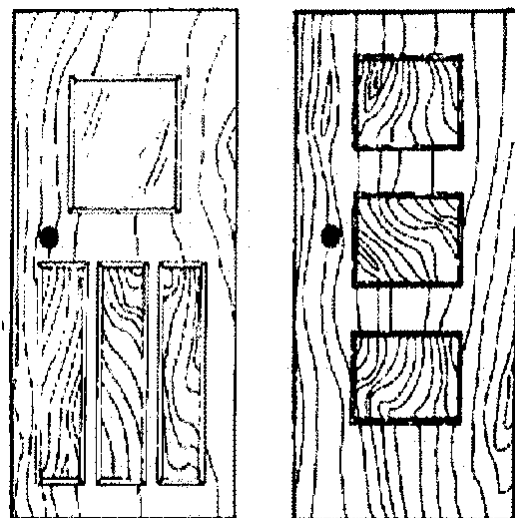
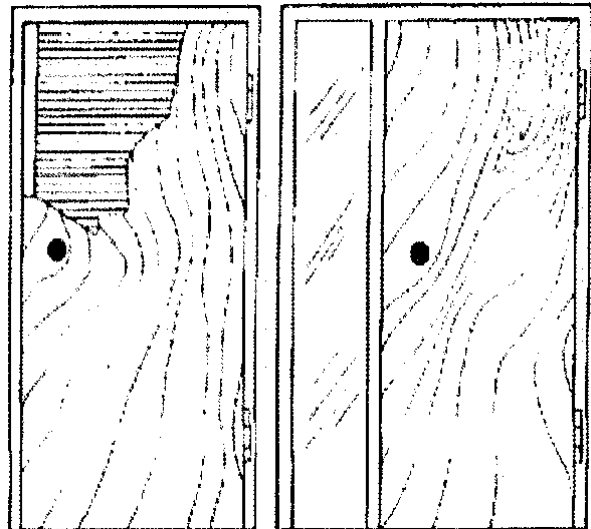
A more economical solution is to reinforce the door on both sides with sheets of plywood, wood-grained Formica, etc.

Even if your door is solid, you need to be concerned about the locks on the door.

### **Exterior Doors with Glass or Thin Panels**

Wooden doors with inset glass or thin wooden panels are easy for a burglar to penetrate and reach the lock inside. Burglars can also reach locks by breaking glass near doors.

Inspect the glass in or by your entrance. Consider installing a shatter-resistant plastic film adhered to the inside surface or a polycarbonate (generically known as “security film”) to the inside window frame.





## **Window Glass and Plastics**

If a door presents a reasonable barrier, a burglar may try to enter through a window by forcing open the window catch with a screwdriver or pry bar. If this fails, some will try to remove a pane of glass by removing the glazing splines or putty with a knife. If this doesn't work, the burglar may break the glass, reach in and release the window latch.

To reduce the opportunity for entry by breaking window glass, consider the following suggestions:

- An operable window, if seldom used and not required as an emergency exit, can be closed with tamper-resistant screws, if it's not needed for an emergency exit.
- Replace thin glass with tempered or laminated glass. Reinforce the glazing spline with longer finish nails, replace the old putty and while doing so, add additional glazing points to make certain windows can't be removed from the exterior. If necessary, it would be better to replace the sash with one where the glazing is held in place by an interior spline.
- Normal window pane glass is about 1/8" thick, extremely brittle and easily broken. Plate glass is usually a minimum of 1/4" thick and will withstand an accidental knock. Plate glass is used for larger areas because of its greater strength due to increased thickness, and because the initial cost is worth the extra protection. Tempered glass, in addition to providing greater strength than ordinary glass for equivalent thickness, will not cut someone who breaks it.



### **Highest Resistance (unbreakable)**

- Polycarbonate plastic, vinyl-bonded laminate glass, 1/2" thick or more.
- Acrylic plastic sheets, 3/8" thick or more.

### **Medium Resistance (vandal-resistant)**

- Wired glass, 1/4" thick.
- Laminated glass, approximately 1/8" thick.
- Acrylic plastic, approximately 1/8" thick depending on specific chemical characteristics.

### **Medium Resistance (break-resistant)**

- Plate glass, 1/4" thick.
- Conventional float or sheet window glass, more than 1/4" thick.
- Tempered plate glass, 1/8" or more in thickness.

### **Shatter-resistant Security Film**

Security Film is a transparent laminate that makes windows stronger and more impenetrable. When applied to windows, it will hold the glass firmly in place if broken.

Security Film is especially useful in windows in or adjacent to doors, to help prevent a burglar from breaking the glass, reaching in and unlocking the door.

### **Heavy Duty Screens**

Heavy duty-window screens can be used to protect vulnerable areas. Insure that windows with these screens have an inside emergency latch release.





### **Ornamental Grillwork**

Ornamental grillwork can be used to protect windows that are particularly vulnerable and easily accessible. To insure fire safety, use an inside release mechanism that is approved by your fire department so you can remove the grill in an emergency.

No untreated glass should be used when security is a problem in doors or entry ways. Even when dead-bolts are used, if untreated glass panels would give a burglar access to the thumb-turn, that glass should be replaced with treated glass, break-resistant plastic, or have an application of security film.

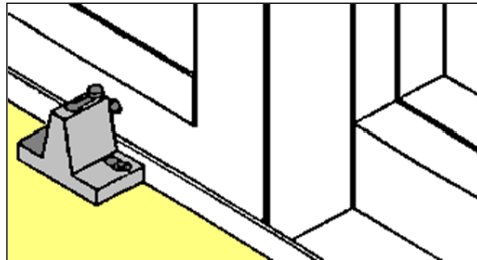
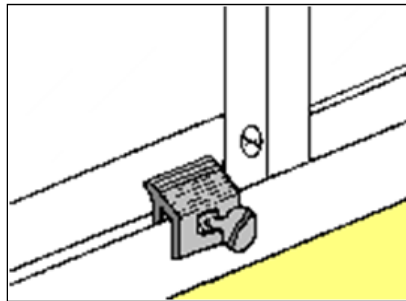
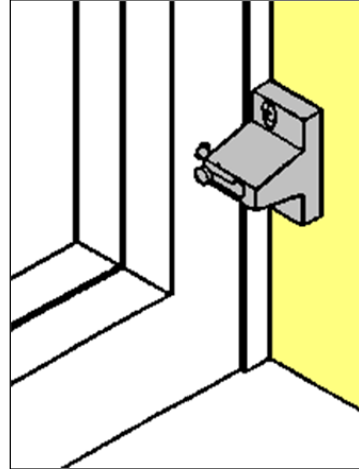
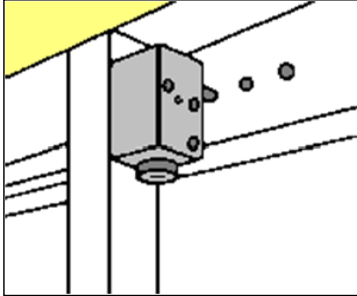
### **Garages and Basements**

Basements usually have the casement-style windows and are vulnerable to entry. Young people most responsible for burglary need very little space though which to enter a home, and poor window catches offer little resistance. Metal window bars or grills should be fastened to the inside of the window frame with an emergency latch release, to aid in exiting your home should a fire occur.



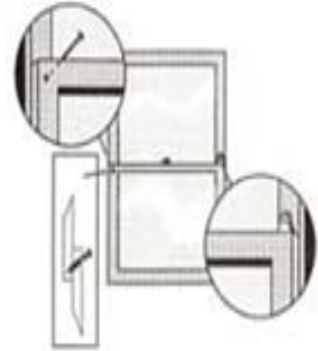
### Auxiliary Window pins and locks

To help prevent a sliding door or windows from being pried open horizontally, auxiliary locks like the type pictured below are recommended. These can be purchased at a very low cost from hardware or home improvement stores. You need a pin/lock that either extends a bolt into the door/window frame, or screws in place at the bottom of the track.



### **Pinning double-hung windows**

To better secure a double-hung window, drill a hole at an angle through the frame of both panes of glass when the window is closed. Insert a long nail into the hole, and this acts as an auxiliary lock.



### **Sliding Patio door locks**

Many home owners choose to drop a wooden dowel in the bottom track of a sliding window or door to keep the glass from being moved horizontally, thus denying entry to a thief who tries to pry the door latch.

Another way to secure the door is with the purchase of a hinged metal bar that fits across the span of the glass and locks in place. The bar can be opened from the inside to open the sliding door.



### French or Double Doors

Your first concern with French or double doors is to brace one door with recessed cane bolts to reduce inward “give” of the doors. This leaves only one door active. Then install a single cylinder deadbolt with a one inch throw in the other door.

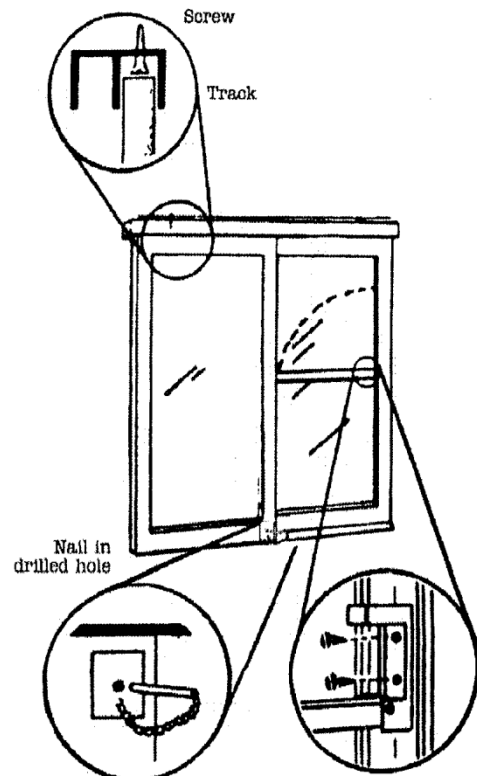
### Sliding Doors and Windows

Exterior sliding doors and windows have a number of security problems in common. Many glass doors and sliding windows have flimsy locks that are easily pried or even jiggled open.

If the door or window slides on an inside track, you may use a metal rod or cut down a length of wooden dowel to fit snugly along the bottom track to prevent the door from being forced open.

A “Charlie Bar” is a more permanent and visible means of preventing lateral movement. Some models are designed to fit an outside sliding door panel.

Some doors and windows can be secured with a pin. Inspect your door or window in the fully-closed position. If the frame permits drilling, drill a hole through the outside frame and halfway through the sliding one. Slide into place a pin or sturdy nail that fits snugly to prevent the door or window from being forced up or back. Be careful when drilling through the frame that you don’t damage the thermal seal or the glass. Fire safety requires that pin locks be installed at the bottom of a window, not at the top. This is to avoid super-heated air near the ceiling of a home engulfed in flames.





## **Miscellaneous**

### **Exterior Lights**

Lighting is considered one of the best deterrents to burglary. High pressure sodium or mercury vapor lights attached to timers are very effective tools that prevent trouble.

Passive infrared sensors that turn lights on when movement is detected are available. They are excellent for enclosed backyards, sidewalks or driveways. They can be cumbersome when the area has a lot of foot traffic or animals.

### **Interior Lights**

During the hours of darkness, and prior to a normal bedtime hour, a home should have lights on in various rooms. A home not showing any interior lights will give the appearance of being unoccupied and could attract the unwanted attention of a burglar. Similarly, a home owner who leaves lights on when absent for a weekend or longer will attract attention to the home during the night because all other homes in the area are in darkness.

A light timer installed in a living room or family room and another in a bedroom, each set to come on and at go off at different time, will give your home the appearance of being occupied during the hours of darkness even when it is not. Timers can also be used to turn on and off a radio.



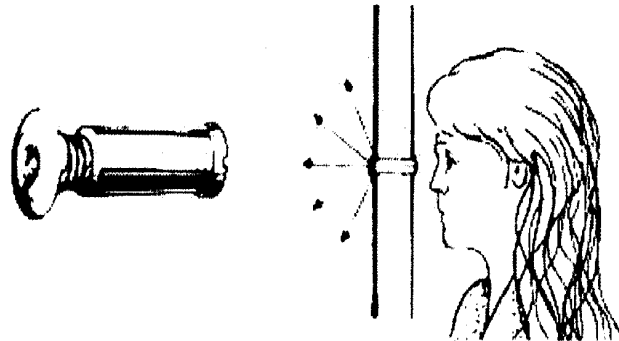
### **Chain Locks**

The chain lock is often used as a night latch. Chain locks are not recommended because they are usually mounted with short screws and have weak chains.

### **Through-Door Viewers**

In order to avoid opening your door without knowing who is there, a viewing device is recommended.

The best solution is to install a through-door viewer, a miniature telescope with a wide angle (220°) lens to let you see someone standing to one side of the door. These are relatively inexpensive and will adjust to varying door thicknesses.



### **Ladders**

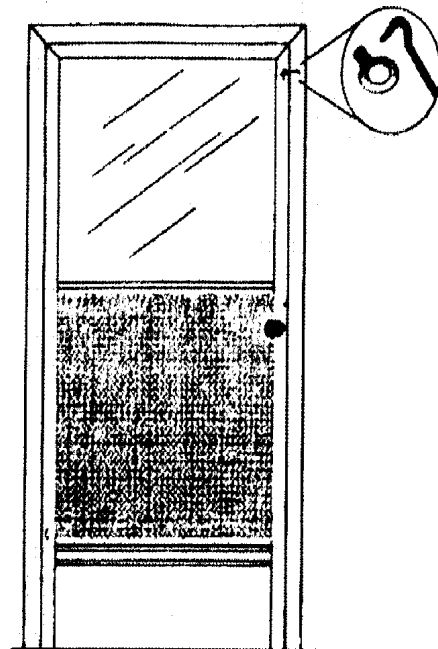
Step and/or extension ladders should not be left outside the house unless secured to an anchor point with a chain and padlock. Similarly, ladders left unsecured in an open garage will afford easy access to a burglar.

### **Storm Doors**

In warm weather, people like to leave their doors open, relying upon the locked storm door to secure the house while working upstairs or in the yard. Slitting the screen will allow a thief quick and quiet access to the inside lock and consequent entry to the home.

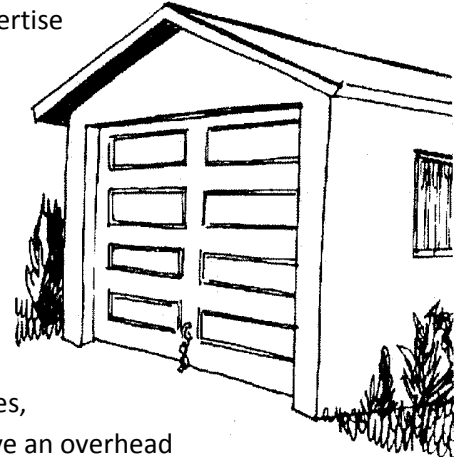
Install a “hook and eye” on the upper part of the storm door. This will hold the door closed even if the would-be thief tampers with the door lock.

Keep in mind that a “hook and eye” provides minimal to no security, and that this type of door should be an auxiliary door only, you will still need a solid-core exterior door with dead-bolt as previously recommended.



## Garages

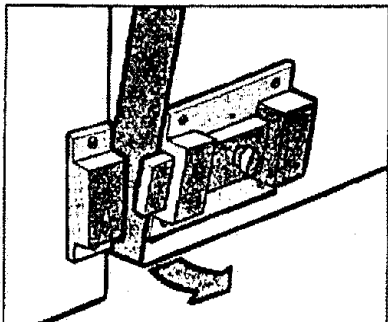
Keep the garage door locked at all times. There is no need to advertise your absence by showing the public your empty garage. Your garage also probably contains valuable items such as bicycles, tools and garden equipment. The burglar may drive right into your garage, close the door and load up the goods, or break into your house from the garage by using your tools to force entry.



The entrance door between a garage and the home should be a solid-core wooden or metal door with a single cylinder deadbolt.

As most garage doors contain less than satisfactory locking devices, you may wish to have a better grade installed. In addition, if you have an overhead garage door, you can increase security by drilling a hole in one of the tracks or door or both and placing a hook or other device in the hole to stop the door from being opened.

Double side hinged garage doors can be made more secure by the installation of bolts. You may wish to consider installing an automatic garage door opener. This device allows you to stay in the safety of your vehicle until the garage door opens instead of having to get out to open it.



A sliding bolt for a garage door that swings out and up.

It is best to purchase a dual frequency remote garage door opener and a worm drill or locking chain mechanism.

If possible, when purchasing a garage door opener, change the frequency from the factory setting. Many garage door openers have the same factory-setting and one person's remote control can often open the garage door at other people's homes.



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## Residential Alarm Systems

### **Audible Alarms**

An audible alarm is a “noise maker.” When a person tries to break into your home and triggers some type of alarm sensor, a loud siren is sounded. The best-use for an audible-only type of alarm would be if you live in an area where you have a lot of neighbors who are home during the day, that you can count on to hear the alarm activate and call 9 1 1 for you.

### **Monitored Alarm**

In a monitored alarm system, a central station monitoring service receives an electrical signal from your home when a sensor is activated. A representative of the company will first call your home to see if it was a false signal, and then call you at an alternate number if there is no one to answer the call at home. Once the alarm company representative can confirm to the best of their ability (2 phone calls are required by local Tacoma ordinance) that no-one was at home to create a false alarm, THEN they call 9 1 1 and report the alarm activation. The 9 1 1 dispatcher will send the call to police at that time.

### **Audible/Monitored Alarm Combinations**

When a sensor is tripped in a combination system, a local siren is sounded AND a call is made to the alarm company dispatch center to investigate the source of the alarm. A combination system can help prevent burglary by letting the burglar know that an alarm was tripped and police will shortly be on the way. The burglar may just choose to leave instead of steal from your home.



## **Recommended Alarm System Components**

An ideal residential alarm system includes:

- Central Station Monitoring including a local alarm (outside siren).
- Sensors on perimeter doors and vulnerable windows.
- Sensors protecting the interior (usually a motion detector).
- Fire Sensors
- Stationary or portable “panic buttons.”

## **Questions to ask an alarm company sales-person**

- Does the alarm company have insurance to cover the cost of any damage to your property caused by the company during installation of the system?
- Are the company and installers properly licensed and bonded? Is anything subcontracted (installation, service or monitoring)?
- Is the alarm company a member of the Washington Burglary and Fire Alarm Association (1-800-248-9272)?
- Is the system equipped with a battery back-up? Is the battery rechargeable?
- Does the company offer a written guarantee? What is guaranteed and for how long? Are parts and labor covered?



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## **Common Residential Alarm Sensors**

### **Motion Detector**

Installed inside a home, a motion detector will activate when heat and motion cross its 180 degree path. Pets and falling objects can be the source of false alarms.

### **Magnetic Contacts**

Used on perimeter doors and windows and made of magnets. When a window or door is closed, the magnets are in contact with one another. The alarm activates when the magnets are separated by an opening door or window.

### **Glass Breakage sensor**

Adhered to windows or placed on a wall facing windows. Alarm activates with combination of vibration and/or noise caused by breaking glass.

### **Vibration Sensor**

Usually applied to windows. Alarm activates with excessive vibration.

### **Pressure Pads**

Usually placed under an entry door mat. Alarm activates when stepped on.

### **Negative Pressure Pads**

These are often used to protect high value items such as artwork on a wall or a safe. The object is placed on an alarm sensor, and the alarm activates when the object is removed.



## Block Watch Program

Block Watch is simply a program of neighbors watching out for each other. At all times when you are at home, be alert to what's going on in your neighborhood. A police officer patrolling your community may not recognize a stranger in your yard, but your neighbors probably would.

### **How Does Block Watch Work?**

Block Watch works through cooperation – Neighbors watching out for other neighbors. Neighbors know who you are, what kind of car you drive, and maybe even your typical work schedule. They may be the first to notice a burglar at your window or door. Each neighbor can effectively watch those homes to each side, the front and the back of his or her own home. The Block Watch Program stresses teaching neighbors how and when to report suspicious activity to each other and to the police.

### **Suspicious Activity to Watch for:**

- A scream from anywhere.
- Anyone removing valuables from homes or vehicles.
- Sound of broken windows or shattered wood.
- Persons going from door to door.
- Strange vehicles parked at your neighbor's house or on the street.
- Vehicle passing by many times, suspiciously parked or constantly travelling back alleys.
- Anyone being forced into a car.
- Beam from a flashlight in a neighbor's home.
- Excessive, short-stay pedestrian and vehicle traffic to a specific home (could be a sign of illegal drug activity).
- Persons loitering around your neighborhood.

If you see something suspicious, write down the description of any suspicious persons. Get the make, model, color and license numbers of strange vehicles. Call the police and other members of your Block Watch group immediately. Don't assume someone else has called, call the police immediately!



## **How Do You Start Block Watch In Your Neighborhood?**

Call Safe Streets (253) 272-6824 or online at [www.safest.org](http://www.safest.org) and you will be connected to a Community Mobilizer who coordinates Block Groups in your community.

If you live in the Tacoma Hilltop neighborhood, contact the Hilltop Action Coalition at (253) 383-3056, <http://hilltopactioncoalition.org/>.

## **How to Report a Crime**

Law enforcement needs your help in reporting crime. Be alert wherever you are and learn how to recognize crime. When you see or hear something that might indicate a criminal act is being committed, don't hesitate to call the police.

When you are reporting a crime, stay calm and state the problem. Give the address where the emergency is occurring. Remember to give the full address and the nearest cross street.

It is important to be able to describe the offender to police after the offense has occurred. Police need to know the suspect's race, sex, age, height, weight, build, complexion, hair and eye color, clothing and miscellaneous identifying marks like tattoos, scars, jewelry, etc.

Let the police dispatcher control the conversation. Answer all questions to ensure the best response. If you wish to remain anonymous, give your name to the operator, then request anonymity.

The City of Tacoma uses 2 different phone numbers to call for police, fire and medical aid services.

If the event is happening right now and a person's life or safety is in immediate risk, call 9 1 1.

For all other calls, use the non-emergency line at (253) 798-4721. Both telephone numbers go to the same dispatch center; however, 9 1 1 emergency calls are attended to first as the presumption is that a person needs immediate assistance for life safety events.

*Important note: do not hang up the phone until the police dispatcher tells you it's safe to do so.*

## **Block Watch Phone Trees**

A very important component of the Block Watch program is to develop a phone tree with your neighbors. A phone tree (and this can be combined with a map of your neighborhood), provides the names and phone numbers of you and your neighbors. The purpose of a phone tree is to call police if an incident occurs, and then call your neighbors, too. There have been many reports of burglars being caught by attentive neighbors due to Block Watch phone calls being put into action, with people looking out their windows and watching as the suspect tries to get away.



## Operation Identification

“Operation Identification” is a tool used by home owners to mark expensive items of property with a unique identifier, to aid in returning stolen property to the rightful owner.

Property owners are asked to engrave their Washington State Driver’s License or Identification Card number on all items that may be subject to theft from a burglar or a thief, such as computers, camera equipment, electronics, specialized tools, or other high-value items in your home.

If an item is stolen during a burglary or theft, it’s often pawned or traded, and frequently comes into the hands of law enforcement. Your help is needed to identify property so police can return it to the lawful owner.

Police are asking you to keep an inventory of the model, serial numbers and complete description of all valuable property items, tools, electronics, computers, etc., and in addition, engrave each item with your driver’s license. Example for fictitious Mary B. Smith: WA-SmithMB396RQ-DL

Driver’s License numbers can be researched on the police computer system, and an officer will be able to discover the name and address of the person to whom the property belongs.

If property is stolen from you, report the theft immediately to law enforcement at (253) 798-4721, or 9 1 1 if it is a burglary in-progress. Use Operation I.D. stickers to advertize that your property is marked and identified, and this may just help to deter a theft.

Call Crime Free Housing to obtain a Property Inventory Sheet to record all of your model, serial numbers and property descriptions, at (253) 591-5048.



## Burglary Prevention Check-List

- ✓ Are your exterior doors fitted with dead-bolts?
- ✓ Are your doors solid core metal or wood?
- ✓ Are strike plates and hinges installed with 3" screws?
- ✓ Have you reinforced the windows in or next to doors that have key locks within reach through the glass?
- ✓ Do you have high-security door hinges?
- ✓ Do you have auxiliary window and patio door locks?
- ✓ Do you lock the doors out of your view when you are working in your yard?
- ✓ Do you avoid leaving keys hidden near access doors?
- ✓ Are sliding doors and windows secured with track screws and/or Charlie-bar?
- ✓ Do you keep tools, ladders, etc., in places inaccessible to potential burglars?
- ✓ Do you store lawn mowers, barbeques, etc., out of sight when not in use?
- ✓ Do you light the outside of your home to discourage prowlers?
- ✓ Are you bushes trimmed to no more than 2' in height and your trees limbed up 6' from the ground to eliminate hiding places and discourage prowlers?
- ✓ Do you use landscape rocks in vulnerable areas around your home?
- ✓ Do you have hostile shrubbery around vulnerable windows and doorways?
- ✓ Is your address number easily visible at all times, including in the alley if you have one?
- ✓ Do you leave a television or radio tuned to a talk-channel on when you are not at home?
- ✓ Do you keep valuables locked in a safe or hidden from view?



### **Apartment Security**

- ✓ Do you refer unknown persons seeking entrance to the manager?
- ✓ Do you report suspicious activity to the manager or police?
- ✓ Do you advise the manager of any travel plans and request apartment checks and mail pick-up?
- ✓ Does your apartment community participate in Crime Free Housing? If not call (253) 591-5048.

### **Vacation Security**

- ✓ Do you notify a trusted neighbor of your travel plans and give a key with a request for a periodic house check?
- ✓ Do you leave your window shades in the normal position?
- ✓ Do you cancel all deliveries?
- ✓ Do you make arrangements for your yard to be kept up and any mail or fliers picked-up?
- ✓ If you own a second car, do you park it in the driveway to look like you're at home?
- ✓ Do you use a light timer on interior and exterior lights?
- ✓ Do you double-check at doors and windows to be sure they are properly secured before leaving?

If your answer is "no" to any of the above, you should improve your home security. Call (253) 591-5048 to ask for a free home security survey by City of Tacoma crime prevention specialists.



## Numbers to Know

9 1 1 non-emergency.....	798-4721
Abandoned Auto Hotline.....	591-5926
Call-2-Haul .....	573-2468
Code Enforcement.....	591-5072
Crack Track .....	475-2725
Crime Free Housing .....	591-5048
Domestic Violence.....	591-5164
Gang Tip Line .....	594-7867
Graffiti Hotline.....	591-5001
Fair Housing.....	591-5043
Hazardous Waste.....	591-5418
Hilltop Action Coalition.....	383-3056
Landlord/Tenant Coordinator .....	591-5163
Neighborhood Crime Prevention Coordinator .....	591-5277
Safe Streets.....	272-6824
Sidewalks (hazardous) .....	591-5270
Streetlights (burnt out).....	591-5287
Street repairs (flooding) .....	591-5495
Police Sector 1 .....	594-7970
NE Tacoma (4731 Norpoint Way NE)	
<i>and</i>	
Central Tacoma (1524 Martin Luther King Way).....	594-7800
Police Sector 2 (5136 N 26th St.).....	573-2508
Police Sector 3 (1501 S 72nd St.).....	594-7838
Police Sector 4 (3524 McKinley St.).....	594-7947