## Garages: a frequent target of thieves

The following column is the fifth in a series written for the Farmington Observer by Chris Cogar, a technician with the Farmington Hills Police Department's Crime Prevention Unit.

Garages, with their many valuable stored items, can be tempting targets for a thief. Due to their location and limited use, this area of your residence is more vulnerable to intruders, and, oftentimes, the least secure portion of value horse.

is more vulnerable to intrudera, and, oftentimes, the least secure portion of your home.

During the past three months in Farmington Hills, more than one out of every three burglaries occurred through the garage. More importantly, in over 50 percent of these incident, the thief gained entrance by record to the hill gained entrance by record garage doors closed and locked. Also, keep in mind that an open garage, without a vehicle inside, sends a clear message that the residents are away from the home. There are a number of precautions you can take to secure your garage and protect any valuable portable items stored inside.

The following suggestions can help you reduce your garage's security weaknesses:

• PROTECT OVERHEAD DOORS

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'Keep in mind that an open garage, without a vehicle inside, sends a clear message that the residents are away from the home."

> Chris Coger, specialist, crime prevention

— The combination handle lock, which operates the two latches on the overhead door, is oftentimes insufficient security. Increase protection by drilling a hole through the track, on each side of the door, as close to the roller as possible. This enables the insertion of a large boil, or heavy-duty padiock, to obstruct the roller and prevent the door from being litted open. Glass inserts and thin masonite, or wood, door panels can be relinforced with metal or wood braces mounted on the inside of the garage door.

• SECURE SERVICE DOORS —
All entry doors should be of metal or solld wood construction. If you have a door with wood panels, or glass inserts, protect these portions from being broken or forced out in the same manner you would to reinforce your overhead garage door. Both outside and inside service doors require a quality dead-bott lock. Because an attached garage can provide excellent cover for burglars to work undetected, while they are gaining entrance into your house.

crime watch

en to reduce the possibility of forced entry through the inside service door. A strong door and lock will be of little value, however, if the door frame is weak, so be sure to check and repair all frames if warping or deterioration is evident

SAFEGUARD WINDOWS — Permanently secure all windows that you don't really need to open. To protect glass, install an unbreakable polycarbonate panel, or a decorative metal grill, on the inside of the window frame. Security film, which adheres to and reinforces the glass, is another alternative. To reduce temptation, eliminate visibility into the garage by installing curtains, sealing windows with plywood, or by painting the glass to block the view from the outside.

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• SECURE VALUABLES — If you store skis, golf clubs, bicycles, mowblowers or other valuable portable items in your garage, each should be individually socured. Should you have a workshop in your pane, earage, consider temoving the more valuable tools to a safer spot in your home. Be sure to safeguard all other tools to a safer spot in your home. Be sure to safeguard all other tools to a safer spot in many attached garages, some thieves have found the use of the homeowner's power tools to be very accessible and quite belphil. To discourage theft, mark all tools and valuable items with an identifying number (Le, your driver's licease number and abbreviation for the state).

• MAINTAIN ELECTRIC OPENERS — Electric garage door

openers furnish added security as long as they are adjusted properly. If the door does not close securely, it could be forced open. Should you plan to leave yeur home for an extended period of time, be sure to disconnect the power to the unit. This will prevent accidential activation from passing auto transmitters, sirplanes or electrical storms.

ALTHOUGH NO one would inten-tionally invite a burglar into their home, one of the major reasons there are so many burglaries is because the average citizen makes it profitable and easy for the thief. Refrain from hiding an extra key in a secret location in your garage for many thieves have learned right where to look.

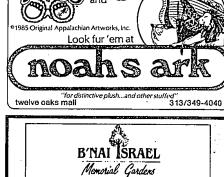
cation.

All trees and bushes should be kept trimmed to provide a clear view and deny the burglar the opportunity to work undetected.

Since the majority of burglars pick their targets at random and, in most cases, whenever the opportunity presents itself, the key to protecting your garage and its contents is to minimize templation by reducing as many security weaknesses as you can.

Experis agree, the best form of protection is crime prevention.





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