

Make your home a tough target

CRIME PREVENTION



KIM KEMAHE

Are you thinking of having an alarm system installed in your home?

Many people install such systems without understanding exactly what they can and can't do. This can be a costly mistake, and it is one that can be avoided with just a little more understanding about crime prevention and a concept called target hardening.

Here are the basics. The primary concept behind crime prevention is the crime triangle.

The first leg of the triangle represents the crime victim. A victim is a necessary component of crime. However, it's the criminal that controls the selection process, not you or me.

The second leg of the triangle represents desire. Again, the criminal's desire to commit a crime is beyond our control.

The third leg of the triangle represents opportunity. This is the one part that we can control to some extent.

"The average criminal is an opportunist. He or she will look for the highest return for the least effort and risk. Therefore, if you increase the effort and risk required to break into your home, you can help to deny a criminal the opportunity to commit a crime."

Target hardening

To deny this opportunity, we

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use a concept known as target hardening. In other words, making homes too hard to break into, too high a risk, or a hardened target.

For a closer look at target hardening your home, there are four steps to consider:

1. **Deterrence:** Make your home look too difficult or too risky to break into at first glance. You can do this with good interior and exterior lighting; well-trimmed shrubbery; mowed lawns; snow shoveled driveways; Neighborhood Watch signs at subdivision entrances; and alarm, Neighborhood Watch and Operation I.D. stickers on windows.

2. **Physical Security:** If deterrence alone doesn't work, we rely on step two to keep the criminal out of your home. Physical barriers such as doors and windows should have high-quality locks (which must be used). Reinforced strike plates with minimum three-inch screws, bars over basement windows, security film on windows, and closed garage doors are just a few examples of how to deny a criminal access to your home.

3. **Detection:** In case a criminal does get in your home, step three is detection. This is where an alarm system can enter the picture. Keep in mind, however, that an alarm, sometimes called a security system, is nothing more

than a detection device. It cannot take the place of the other levels of security and internal security.

If you decide to install an alarm system, be sure to include a loud bell or siren (with an automatic shutoff) to alert neighbors and, we hope, scare off intruders. The alarm should also be monitored by an alarm company, so the Police Department is notified — if there's no response to an alarm, you may as well not have one. Keep in mind, too, that the monitoring of an alarm is done over your telephone lines. If your phone lines are cut, there will be no signal, and therefore no alarm.

Alarm systems are specialized equipment and must be tailored to your home and needs to be effective. Contact at least three reputable companies before having a system installed in your home.

Know the rules

Before installing an alarm, be sure that you read and fully understand the Farmington Hills alarm ordinance. Some things you should know include:

- Alarm systems must be registered with the Farmington Hills police department.
- A check for \$15 must accompany the registration form.
- The police department will charge a response fee of up to \$100 for false alarm responses.
- For exterior alarm bells or

sirens, an automatic shutoff is required which silences the alarm signal within ten minutes of activation.

■ For more information on alarms and the alarm ordinance, call the Crime Prevention Section at 473-9640.

A dog can sometimes be a good detection device (and maybe less trouble than an alarm), making you aware of intruders if you're in the home.

4. **Internal Security:** This level comes into play once a criminal is inside your home. Secure your personal property by purchasing a safe for jewelry, cash and documents; secure a closet with a lock for cameras, furs and firearms; engrave all valuables with your driver's license (engravers are loaned free of charge by the Crime Prevention Section); and anchor or cable televisions, stereos and VCRs. Try to keep small valuable items, such as cash and jewelry, in unusual places — not the upper right hand drawer in the master bedroom dresser. That's the first place a burglar will look.

To find out more about how to best protect your home, contact the Crime Prevention Section to schedule a free security survey of your home.

We also offer free loan of engraver, presentations on various crime prevention topics, and a free variety of resource materials. Call 473-9640.

Kim Kemahe is a crime prevention specialist with the Farmington Hills Police Department.

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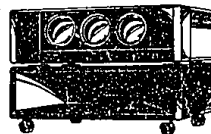
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