

How Homeowner Can Reduce The Chances Of A Burglary

(Fourth in a series of articles telling how communities in other parts of the land are fighting the growing crime rate in home and business thefts. The series also relates steps that area residents can take by using Operation Identification.)

FARMINGTON

What can the homeowner do to minimize, if not eliminate, the chances of his home becoming the target of a burglary?

Police in Farmington are emphasizing the Operation Identification program as a means to discourage burglars and to recover property that is stolen.

Basically, it is intended to make your possessions—particularly such burglar-favorite items as your television set, stereo set, radio, camera and small appliances—harder and less profitable for the thief to sell.

This is accomplished through the police and fire services of checking out electric engravers to residents of the city to mark their belongings with their driver's license number. In this manner, belongings can be readily identified as yours.

The engravers may be obtained free of charge from both the Farmington and Farmington Hills police departments.

When a person returns the engraver to the agency from which it was borrowed, he receives decals for his doors and windows which, in effect, notify burglars that the items of value in your home are marked and identifiable.

The Operation Identification system is modeled after the successful plan originated in Monterey Park, Calif.

A person using an engraver should also make an inventory of marked items, their location in the home, and serial numbers—when possible—for police to use in tracing the property in the event of a burglary.

If the police don't know an item is missing, it's hard to be on the lookout for it. Officers frequently find suspected stolen property but have no way to trace its ownership.

It is essential that you do not unwittingly make it easy for burglars to go about their larcenous business, police point out.

For example, unlocked doors and windows make entry simple for even the least experienced burglar.

Obvious signs of absence, such as a stack of uncollected newspapers lying on your front porch, indicate to burglars that they can probably work undisturbed.

A lack of interest or concern by neighbors and passers-by is law enforcement officials, who tell true stories about thieves carrying stolen television and stereo sets down residential streets in broad daylight without anyone becoming suspicious.

An inability by many persons to accurately describe their missing (and unmarked) personal property makes recovery and subsequent identification processes all the more difficult.

Short of digging at most your door—under a mat, over a molding, etc. Usually, what you can hide a burglar can find. If you want an extra key outside your house, take to ensure against the possibility of a break-in.

Police offer the following general tips:

- Have strong, sturdy locks on all doors. Spring latch locks—the kind that snap shut when you close the door—are child's play for burglars to open. Consult a locksmith to check on your specific needs.
- Don't forget windows can also provide access to burglars. Use effective window locks. A safe and unobtrusive lock can be made by drilling through the top of the bottom window sash and the bottom of the top sash and inserting a small nail into the hole.
- Change locks, or at least have the lock tumblers reset, when you move into a previously occupied dwelling you never know who may still have a key to your door.
- Remember to lock your doors when you go out, even if it's "just for a minute."
- The best locks are useless if left unlocked. And be sure to secure all entrances before going to bed at night.
- Don't hide a key outside your door—under a mat, over a molding, etc. Usually, what you can hide a burglar can find. If you want an extra key outside your house, leave one with a trusted neighbor who lives nearby.
- Use caution before allowing strangers into your home. Use a door peep-hole or talk-through device. Don't be afraid to ask for identification—persons with legitimate business will be happy to show it.
- Report broken streetlights in your neighborhood. Well-lit areas discourage burglars by eliminating their hiding places.
- Don't leave your house keys and car keys together with an attendant at a public parking lot. The house keys can quickly be duplicated and your address obtained from your car's license plate number.
- Use metal grillwork on windows in or near doors to prevent burglars from breaking the glass and reaching through to unlock the door.
- Another solution to this problem is the use of double cylinder locks (a key must be used from the inside as well as the outside).
- If you notice strangers loitering suspiciously in your neighborhood, report them to police. The same goes for persons who come around asking strange or vague questions about your neighbors and their whereabouts.
- Leave a couple of lights on when you go out in the evening, to create the impression that someone is home. A radio or TV set turned on low volume helps, too.

Homeowners are advised by police to:

- Store ladders inside your home or garage, or at least locked securely if they must be left outside. Don't leave a ladder lying loose outside, or it may be used by a burglar to reach an upstairs window.
- Close your garage door whether you are home or away. An open door can reveal an empty garage, and may inform a burglar that your home is also empty.
- Keep patio doors secured. They should lock from the inside, and a wooden rod like a broomstick placed in the inside track will prevent sliding the door open from the outside.
- Use outside lights effectively. Entrance lights and post lights illuminate possible hiding places around your house.
- Be alert for unusual activities in your neighborhood. If you see an unknown person hanging around a neighbor's yard, it might be wise to check on his identity by telephone with the neighbor.
- Apartment dwellers are advised by police to:
- Keep outer main doors to your building locked, if these doors have locks. Cooperate with tenants to see that the doors are not opened unless you know who is requesting entrance.
- Use auxiliary locks which can be placed on windows that may, for instance, open onto fire escapes, and on doors that open onto terraces and balconies.
- Don't allow mail to accumulate in your mailbox in the lobby of your building. This indicates to a burglar that nobody is at home.
- Don't keep expensive items like furs or jewelry, as well as large sums of money, lying about in plain view. That solicitor at your door may return later for a different purpose if he spots such valuables.

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