

Port Wentworth Police Department
Crime Prevention Tips



Burglary is Everyone's Problem!

Burglary is a serious crime to which all of us are vulnerable....city or rural, high or low income, homeowner or apartment dweller. And the chances of being burglarized are increasing every year. According to FBI statistics, there's a residential burglary once every 15 seconds.

Burglary is probably the most preventable of crimes. The problem is that many of us, through our own carelessness, make it easier for burglars to carry out their work. In addition, many people don't worry about burglary because their insurance covers theft losses. But insurance can never replace keepsakes or priceless heirlooms. And let's not forget about family security...not all burglars are just thieves. Remember, too, that the easier people make it for burglars, the higher insurance rates must be.

If everyone would take a few simple precautions, the number of residential burglaries could be significantly reduced.

There's no better way for you to give your local law enforcement agencies the support they deserve.

Q. Your doors already have locks. What else do you need?

A. Take a good look at those locks. Just because you can't get in without a key doesn't mean the same is true for a burglar. Some locked doors can be opened in seconds with just a plastic credit card.

If someone lived in your house or apartment before you, have the locks changed, or, have the cylinders in the locks changed. It doesn't cost as much, and it's just as effective as putting in new locks.

Check your windows, sliding glass doors and garage. They should be kept securely locked at all times when not in use. If your garage is attached to your house, the door between them should be locked as securely as any exterior door.

A lock is only as good as what it's attached to. Doors should be solid core or metal. And when screwing into door or window frames, use 2" to 2 1/2" screws to reach the solid wood studs behind the frames. Then *use* your locks. Even if you are home, lock the doors. If you are outside in the backyard, make sure the front entrance is locked. If in the front yard, lock the back.

Q. Why lock windows? Won't a burglar just break the glass?

A. Burglars do not want to be seen or heard, so they usually won't risk breaking glass to enter a home. Be sure to use whatever locks that are already on your windows. Then screw the window shut. That should discourage most burglars.

With the windows screwed shut, it's important to teach family members how to get out in case of fire. Don't take the time to unscrew the window. Throw something like a chair through the glass, cover the broken edges with a blanket and crawl out.

Q. How about bars on windows and doors?

A. You can probably secure your home effectively without bars, but if you live in a high risk neighborhood, you might feel safer with them. For greatest security, have them installed inside the house where the burglar can't easily remove them. And be sure there are "escape hatches" in case of fire.

Q. Burglar alarms can cost a lot. Are they necessary?

A. Necessary? No. But there are some instances when you might feel more comfortable with a burglar alarm. For example: (1) if your home is isolated from view; (2) if it contains many valuable items such as art, coin or stamp collections, furs or fine jewelry; or (3) if you are living in a burglary-prone neighborhood. There are many different types of alarms available. Ask your local police for their recommendations.

Q. What should you do if you see a burglary happening?

A. If you think there's a burglar in your neighbor's home, call the police immediately. Do NOT try to catch the suspect yourself. But if you do come face-to-face with a burglar in your own home, you should try to keep him from panicking and attacking you. Simply say, "Tell me what you want and I'll get it for you". Chances are he'll run out of the house. Or he might even take something. But anything material you lose is better than risking serious injury or losing your life. After he's gone call the police immediately. And do NOT tidy up. You may disturb evidence the police could use.

Q. What are some other simple tips you could use?

A. (1) Most burglaries occur during the day, so ask neighbors who are home all day to watch your home. Organize a Neighborhood Watch Group. (2) Demand identification of any stranger at your door, no matter how "respectable he looks. If he wants to use your phone, make the call for him without letting him in. Burglars and rapist frequently pose as salesman, repairman census takers, inspectors, etc. If you are not sure, do not open the door. (3) Before answering the door, yell out "I'll get it" or "Sit, stay". This makes the person at the door think that you are not alone or that you have a well trained dog. (4) Carry your cordless phone to the door and pretend you are having a conversation, telling your "caller" that someone is at the door and what he looks like. You can also call 911 faster if you have a phone in your hand. (5) Don't tell a caller that you are home alone. (6) Don't publicize your vacations, business trips or social events that will take you away from home. Burglars have even be known to watch obituaries and steal from the bereaved while they're at the funeral. (7) If you are on vacation, have a neighbor leave tire tracks in your driveway and move your parked car around to different spots. Pay a neighbor's teen to mow your lawn. (8) Use light timers and motion sensors. (9) If you are outdoors in the backyard, make sure your front and side doors is locked; in the frontyard, the back and side doors are locked. (10) When on vacation, do not leave a garage door opener in any car left in the driveway.

(11) Do not post your name on your mailbox. A burglar with a cell phone, Bressler's address book and phone book can sit out in front of your house, call your number and see if anyone is home answering the phone. (12) A simple "Beware of Dog" sign may make someone think twice about entering your yard.

Q. What do you do if you've been getting a lot of hang-up phone calls or callers asking for someone you've never heard of?

A. Hang-up phone calls may be a telemarketer's computer hanging up after too many rings, the phone company working on lines or a prankster. Wrong numbers may be a dialing error. By pressing *69 you may be able to find out who the caller was, but not always and this service carries a charge. You may want to invest in Caller-ID. But there's always the chance that a burglar may be calling from his cell phone to see if anyone is home. This also goes for people who knock on your door looking for someone you've never heard of. If no one answers, the burglar will just kick in your door. Therefore, it's wise to answer your phone and see who is at the door. But never open the door if you do not recognize the person, or give out personal information over the phone. Obscene phone calls should be reported to your local phone company.

Some things you should know about locks...

DOORS If you can lock your door by slamming it, burglars can open it quickly with plastic objects like credit cards. You can make things tough for burglars by using locks that must be opened and closed with a key.

Your local locksmith is the man to see for good advice on force and pick-resistant locks. remember, it is important to get good locks for all your outside doors, not just the main entrance. If a burglar has trouble with one door lock, he will often check the other doors for an easier way to get in.

WINDOWS Locking windows is just as important as locking doors. The latches on double-hung windows can be jimmed open. You can lock them securely by sliding bolts into holes drilled through the bottom and into the frame.

Casement windows can be made more secure by replacing the lever locks with key-lockable devices which you can get at hardware stores and locksmiths. However you lock your windows, be sure that they can be opened quickly from the inside in case of fire.

SLIDING GLASS DOORS These are a favorite means of entry for burglars. Sliding glass doors are often easy to jimmy open and do not have adequate locks. Your locksmith has special locks for sliding glass doors that can give you much better security than those usually built into the doors.

Keys to Security

1. Lock all outside doors before you leave or go to bed.
2. Lock all windows.
3. Leave lights on when you go out. A radio playing is also a good burglar deterrent. If you're going to be away any length of time, connect some lamps to automatic timers so your lights turn on at dusk and off for bedtime.

4. **Keep your garage door closed and locked...an empty garage is a good sign that no one is home.**
5. **Don't allow daily deliveries to accumulate when you're gone. Cancel them by phone or in person, or ask your neighbors to take in your mail, newspapers and advertising. Never leave notes that can tip off burglars to your plans.**
6. **Arrange to have your lawn cut in summer and walks & driveway shoveled in winter if you're going to be away for an extended period of time. Have a neighbor drive up & down your driveway to leave tire marks.**

In the Last Six Months...

Did you leave the front door or garage door unlocked while you made a quick trip to the store?

Was it too much trouble to check the meter readers' identification before letting him in?

Did you forget to tell a neighbor that you were going away for the weekend?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, you are making it easier for a thief to work in your community.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Good locks, simple precautions, neighborly alertness and common sense can help prevent crimes. Get together with your neighbors to keep an eye on each other's homes. Half of all home burglaries occur during the day when alert neighbors could spot the thieves and call police. Many neighborhoods have started youth patrols or senior citizen "Window Watchers" or trained people like newspaper carriers, cab drivers and utility employees to watch out for suspicious activity on their routes.

LOCKS, DOORS AND WINDOWS

***Install good deadbolt locks in your doors, not the spring latch ones with the key in the knob. Use them! (About 50 percent of burglars get in through unlocked doors and windows).**

*** Avoid door locks that can be manipulated by breaking glass or door panels to reach inside.**

*** Make sure outside doors, including the one between your house and garage, are solid 1 3/4 inch metal or wood and fit tightly in their frames. Hinges should be on the inside.**

*** Secure sliding glass doors with commercially available locks, with a rigid wooden dowel in the track, or with a nail inserted through a hole drilled in the sliding door frame and projecting into the fixed frame.**

*** Lock double-hung windows by sliding a bolt or nail through a hole drilled at a downward angle in each top corner of the inside sash and partway through the outside sash, or buy window key locks at the hardware store. Consider grills for basement or street-level windows.**

Outside

Trim back shrubbery that hides doors or windows. Cut back tree limbs that could help a thief climb into a second story window.

Make sure all porches, entrances and yards are well lighted.

Help keep your neighborhood in good shape. Dark alleys, litter and run-down areas attract crime.

YOUR DOG

Besides being a family pet, your dog's principal use is to serve as a warning device and as a deterrent. If your dog barks, investigate it.

Try to leave your dog at home when you are away. Arrange to have it fed, watered and walked by a trusted friend or neighbor.

A specially trained security dog, especially an attack dog, is NOT a good idea, except in the most extraordinary circumstances. Always investigate very thoroughly before buying such a dog.

Key Sense

Do not hide house keys in mailboxes, planters or under doormats. Give a duplicate key to a trusted friend or neighbor in case you are locked out.

Do not put any personal identification on key rings.

Leave only your ignition key with service mechanics and parking garage attendants.

If you lose the keys to your home or move, change the locks immediately.

Even though today's lifestyle sometimes make it difficult to be as neighborly as we'd like, being a good neighbor is one of the best ways to prevent crime.

***Get to know your neighbors and discuss your concerns about safety in the community.**

***If you notice anything suspicious in your neighborhood, call the police immediately.**

***Exchange work and vacation schedules with a neighbor you can trust so you can keep an eye on each other's homes.**

***Never tell a stranger or an individual you don't trust that a neighbor lives alone, is ill or is not at home.**

*** Report any nonworking street lights to the utility company immediately.**

Going Away?

***Leave lights on and the radio playing, preferably a talk show, when you go out.**

***Keep your garage door closed and locked.**

***Use inexpensive timing devices to turn inside lights and radios or television on and off at different times.**

Take Action Today

- 1. Teach your children safety rules about answering the phone and the door and how to get out if there's a fire.**
- 2. Join or start a Neighborhood Watch or Block Watch.**
- 3. If you keep very valuable possessions in your home or live in an isolated area, investigate the benefits of an alarm system. Be sure to check the company's references and with the Better Business Bureau.**
- 4. Engrave electronics, computers and other valuables with your driver's license number including the state initials. Compile an inventory, using photos or videotapes.**
- 5. Make sure your house number is clearly visible from the street.**
- 6. Find an unpredictable place to hide valuable items, like a removable floorboard, under logs in the woodbox, in with feminine hygiene products, among cleaning supplies, in the washing machine or dryer mixed with clothing.**
- 7. Store little used items like a coin collection or stock certificates in a safety deposit box.**
- 8. Install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.**
- 9. Don't include your name in classified ads or announce in the paper that you are going on vacation. Do not put your name on your mailbox.**

Burglars hope to avoid confrontations, so make your home look occupied.

**** The above are Crime Prevention Tips. If used, they will reduce the chances of you or yours becoming a victim of Crime.**

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU CAN DO IS TO BE INVOLVED. BE A PART OF YOUR COMMUNITY WATCH. COMMUNITY WATCH IS YOURS AND FOR YOUR COMMUNITY.

**LAW ENFORCEMENT NEEDS YOUR HELP. AS MCGRUFF SAYS-
"TAKE A BITE OUT OF CRIME."**

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