

St. Louis County Police

Neighborhood Policing Unit

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Residential Inventory & Security Education Handbook



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Introduction

Have you recently heard of a home being burglarized in your neighborhood? Perhaps you have been a victim. Not a good feeling, is it?

Burglary is one of the most frequently committed crimes; however, in some instances it is preventable. Most residential burglaries are committed by opportunists who spot an open garage, a faulty lock, or a house that appears to be unoccupied.

There are steps you can take in order to reduce the chances of being a burglary victim. Read this booklet for tips. Most of the suggestions require little to no financial investment but will contribute immensely to your peace of mind and aid in safeguarding your property.

Remember, lock your doors and windows when you leave your home! If you have a home alarm system, use it! Don't become a crime victim and please share this booklet with your neighbors.

Home Security Survey

No house is absolutely burglar-proof when professional burglars target your home. However, they would be the first to admit that home owners can discourage burglars if they increased their home security. You can begin this process by identifying the most vulnerable areas, in regards to your home security, and correcting them.

The checklist in the back of this handbook will assist you in systematically surveying your home. Every "No" check mark shows a weak point that may allow a burglar easy access into your home. If you have security risks, read this handbook to find out how to correct them. As you eliminate the "No" check marks, you improve your protection.

Remember, this survey will only identify your weak areas. You have not improved your home security until those are corrected. Complying with these suggestions will not, of course, make your home burglar-proof, but it will certainly improve your protection.

If you would like professional advice and assistance in a thorough home security survey, call the North County Precinct, Neighborhood Policing Unit. To increase your security, take a critical look at your home!

The Next Step

Now that you have identified the weak points in your home security, you can take the next step and learn about securing your home. The next section of this handbook provides tips on how to secure your home.



Protecting Against Entry

Many of the locks and other items described in this section are inexpensive and do not require professional installation. Your Neighborhood Policing Unit is available to answer any questions you may have.

Key Control

True security begins with key control. When you move into a home, apartment, or lose your keys, always have the locks re-keyed. You do not have to replace the lock, as re-keying will render the previous keys useless. Any licensed locksmith can change the tumblers in your outside door locks quickly and inexpensively.

Do not leave an “emergency” key under the door mat, on top of the door frame, or in any other “hiding spot”.

Never attach a name, address, or license tag to your house keys as this provides directions and access to your home to a potential burglar.

Keep car keys and house keys separate. Never leave your house keys with an attendant at a car wash or valet parking lot.

Exterior Lighting

Exterior lighting is extremely important in residential security. Each exterior doorway should be lighted from dusk to dawn so a burglar cannot hide in the shadows while attempting to gain entry into your home. Yards and windows should be lighted. Night blind spots can be illuminated by utilizing ornamental porch and yard lamp posts.

Yard and entrance lights can be equipped with sensors that turn the light on at dusk and off at dawn or when it detects motion. The motion detectors seem to work best because they alert the presence of someone when the light turns on. Motion detector lights can also be equipped with bell or other warning sounds. Check the sensors or motion detectors periodically to make sure they work.

Landscaping

Keep doorways, windows, and porches clear when planting bushes and flowers. Remember that the bushes that provide you with privacy also give a burglar a place to hide.

Prune large trees in order to reduce a burglars ability to climb lower limbs up to the second story. A well-maintained lawn is a very effective clue that someone is at home and cares. Plan your landscaping with both privacy and security in mind—planting thorny bushes and shrubs near windows and along fences may discourage burglars.

Locked gates and well-maintained fences can make break-ins more difficult and prevent the removal of large items. Walkways and driveways should be easily visible from the street so that no landscaping offers concealment for intruders.



Doors

Hinge doors

The hinge door is the most common type used in homes and apartments. They are used for front, porch, garage and basement doors leading into the home. All exterior hinge doors should be of solid core construction at least 1-3/4 inch thick. The door frame should be of solid construction and be equipped with a proper strike plate. Hollow core or composition board doors can be easily battered or broken through.

Outside hinges

Doors with hinges on the outside will provide a burglar with easy access into your home. The burglar only has to remove the hinges and lift the door away from its frame. This situation can be corrected in three ways:

- Remove the door and remount the hinges on the inside of the frame so that the door swings inward; or
- Install a set of hinges with non-removable hinge pins; or
- Install a locking pin below the existing hinge plate. Here is how:
 - (1) Drill holes below the hinge plate.
 - (2) Insert a “headless” screw, bolt or nail into the door jamb below the hinge plate. Leave at least one-half inch of the screw, bolt or nail extending from the frame.

Once this is done, as the door closes, the pin in the jamb will penetrate the hole in the door and the door will be held in position even if the hinge pins are removed.

Dead bolt locks

The best defense for a solid core wood door is a dead bolt lock with a one-inch throw bolt. The security dead bolt lock can be used on any hinge door where the strike plate can be securely fastened to the door frame. When installing a dead bolt, attach the strike plate (the jamb fastening that receives the bolt in the locking position) to the door with four to six, three-inch brass wood screws. The screws should penetrate through the frame and into a structural member.

Dead bolt locks come in double key cylinder and inside thumb-operated models. If there are no windows in or near the door, the bolt may be operated from inside by a thumb turn. Both single and double key cylinder dead bolt locks should meet the following criteria to be considered a proper security device:

- The bolt must extend a minimum of one-inch and contain a hardened steel insert.
- The dead bolt should contain a cylinder guard to prohibit twisting of the lock with a wrench or pliers. It must be solid metal — not hollow casting or stamped metal.
- The key way should contain a five-pin tumbler system to make it more difficult to pick.
- The connecting screws that hold the lock together must be on the inside and made of case-hardened steel. No screw heads should be exposed on the outside.
- The connecting screws must be at least one-fourth inch in diameter and go into solid metal stock, not screw posts.



Many communities prohibit the use of double key cylinder dead bolt locks because they may slow egress if the door is to be used as an emergency fire exit. Consult your local law enforcement agency, fire department or locksmith, regarding the use of such locks. If one is used in your home, a key should be left in the inside cylinder whenever the home is occupied.

Key-in-the-knob locks.

If installed on an outside door, they are an invitation to even the most inexperienced burglar. These locks can be forced by breaking off the knob, and are frequently opened by prying or slipping a piece of plastic between the jamb and the bolt. Do not rely on these locks! Install a dead-latching plunger type lock to supplement it.

Locks for double doors.

Many homes with double doors use half-barrel slide bolts on the inactive door. These are weak and inadequate and should not be relied upon. Additional locking devices should be installed. Flush bolts installed at the top and bottom of the inactive door offers additional security since the intruder cannot gain access to these devices if the doors are locked. It is important that the bolts have at least one-inch of throw and that they protrude well into the top frame and threshold. Additionally, the strike plates should be well secured with at least three-inch brass wood screws.

Security for doors with glass

If an exterior door has a glass window or if there is glass within 40 inches of the lock, you may want to install security screening, window guards or burglary rated glazing. Use non-removable screws to securely mount screens, bars or window guards.

Sliding glass doors.

Sliding glass doors present a major security problem if they do not have the proper locks and if steps are not taken to prevent removal of the door.

A sliding glass door is lifted into position when installed and therefore, must be lifted from the track to be removed. To prevent this, insert #8 or #10 sheet metal screws into the top of the door frame at both ends and the middle. Adjust these screws so that the door barely clears them when it is operated. If properly inserted, this will take up the slack between the upper part of the door and the interior frame.

It is important to note that dowels alone placed in the door track will not prevent a burglar from removing the sliding door. A security bar or track lock will assist in securing the sliding door.

The best lock for a sliding glass door is operable by key from the inside. The lock bolt should engage the strike sufficiently so that it will not be disengaged by any amount of movement. When the existing inside pull has to be changed in order to accommodate a new deadlock, an inside cylinder pull is recommended as a replacement. A single lock is not recommended because of the softness of aluminum frames.

A supplemental lock should be installed at the top or bottom, constructed of steel and inserted in the sliding door at a slightly downward angle.



Garage Doors

Garage doors should always be closed and locked whenever you are away from home. Most garages offer burglars a wide selection of tools to use in breaking into your home. Garages often contain ladders for accessing second story windows and are also a convenient, hidden route for entry into your home through the connecting interior door. Remember, a securely locked garage will reduce a burglars ability to steal automobiles, tools, bicycles, lawn mowers and other property.

Sectional roll-up doors

For overhead sectional roll-up doors, drill a hole of proper size in the door track, just above one of the guide rollers while the door is in the closed position, and install a padlock. Many doors are installed with pre-drilled holes that will accommodate this security feature without having to drill. Or, install eye bolts on the inside top of the garage door and the door frame. When the garage door is closed, a padlock can secure the bolts and prevent opening of the door.

Electric garage door openers

An electric garage door opener should have steel gears and chain activation. Periodically check the door to make sure it is adjusted to prevent the bottom from being lifted up. This stops the thief from crawling under the door. When you move into a new home, reset the code in the opener and the remote control units.

Cane bolts can be installed on the inside of the door. These can only be locked from the inside. Sliding hasps can also be used on the inside of the door.

Lifting doors

Hardened steel hasps and padlocks are recommended to secure both sides of a lifting garage door. This is to prevent the lifting of the opposite side and crawling under the door.

Installing the hasp.

A hasp must be constructed of hardened steel and installed with carriage bolts through the door. Use large washers on the inside. When installing hasps, make sure that the mounting screws are covered when the hasp is locked. After the bolts are secured, deface the threads of the bolt ends with a hammer to keep the nuts from being removed.

Selecting a padlock.

Use a good quality padlock to secure your garage door. There are many padlocks on the market from which to choose. Some can even be keyed to your house key. Don't be frugal when selecting a padlock! Most combination padlocks are poor security because the bodies of these locks are very weak. The most common assault on a padlock is with a large bolt cutter or pry bar. Some padlocks have built-in shackle guards which make them difficult to attack with bolt cutters. The following description of the minimum standard for an exterior padlock can be taken to the locksmith or hardware store:



- Case hardened steel, 7/16 inch shackle. (Short, heavier shackles offer additional security.) Stainless steel shackles offer the ultimate in padlock security.
- Double-locking mechanism — heel and toe.
- Five pin tumbler.
- A key retaining feature, whenever possible. This prevents you from removing the key until you have locked the padlock.

Some padlocks have the key code number printed on them, which should be filed off. Otherwise, a burglar can go to a locksmith, give the brand/number and buy a duplicate key. Never leave your padlock unlocked. This is an invitation to have the padlock removed so that a key can be made and the lock returned to its original location. Later the burglar returns when no one is home and enters at his or her leisure, using that key.

Other garage doors

The weakest link in an attached garage is usually the side (rear) door. Doors with window panes or thin veneer wood or no dead bolt locks should be considered a primary entry for a burglar. Take measures to make this door as secure as the front door. In most cases, it is easier to replace the door or reinforce the existing wood panels with plywood on the interior; or replace the glass with burglary resistant glazing to prevent entry through the window.

Windows

Sliding windows

Sliding windows should be secured by the same methods used for the sliding doors. Both the pan head top screws and the bracing devices are effective on this type of window, if the slider is on the inside. Several types of auxiliary locks, which offer improved security, are also available.

Casement windows (crank type)

These windows are the easiest to secure. Make sure the locking latch works properly and the crank which opens and closes the window has no excessive play. Replace any worn hardware. Key lock handles are available, if you desire. If the window is not normally opened or closed, remove the crank handle.

Double-hung sash-type windows

To secure these windows, drill a hole that angles slightly downward through a top corner of the bottom window into the bottom of the top window, on both sides. Then place an eye bolt or eight penny nail into the hole to prevent the window from being opened. Auxiliary latches may also be installed. The most effective protection for double hung windows is a key-locking security sash lock. If possible, mount the lock with two-inch wood screws.

Louvered windows

It is best to replace louvered windows with another type. Metal grating may also be used as long as it is secured with large bolts, preventing the bars or grating from being torn free from their mount.



While waiting for the installation of replacement windows or window bars, here are a few tips to help secure the existing windows:

- Remove each individual pane of glass and sand the glass and metal frame where the two meet; and,
- Apply a two-part epoxy resin glue to the sanded area and replace the piece of glass into the framework.

Basement windows

Basement windows are one of the most common points of entry for burglars. Special attention should be paid to securing them if they are hidden by bushes or trees which provide burglars with an ideal place to work unobserved. Such windows should be replaced with plexi-glass, polycarbonate, or reinforced with decorative security bars.

Garage windows

If you use garage windows for ventilation, install the same security items as recommended for the windows in your home. Hang curtains or mini-blinds to prevent a potential burglar from checking to see if you're home or window shopping for valuables.

Window guards or grilles

For extremely vulnerable windows, you may wish to consider installing heavy gauge metal (iron) grilles. Before installation, consult your local fire department about emergency release requirements. Grilles should be attached with one way screws or fastened from the inside. Bars and gratings are not recommended for sleeping rooms because they could create an egress hazard. However, if they are used, they must have an inside mechanism that allows them to swing out in an emergency.

Alarm Systems

An alarm system can contribute to your home's security. However, do not depend solely upon an alarm to protect you. Be sure to use the proper locking devices and participate in a Neighborhood Watch program in your area.

Entire alarm systems may be leased or purchased from professional state licensed alarm companies and are also available from electrical and hardware dealers or home improvement stores. Alarm system installation by a well-established professional alarm company in your community will save you money in service calls and local fines. You may wish to consult with your local Better Business Bureau to determine which companies are reputable in your community.

Get at least three estimates and then decide which alarm company and system is best for your needs.

Any alarm system should include:

- A fail-safe battery backup.
- Fire-sensing capability (ionization sensors are best).



- Readout ability to verify the system is active. Test your alarm periodically if your system has that feature.
- Horn-sounding device.

Most residential alarms emit a loud noise from a bell, siren or tone generator. An audible alarm on doors and windows can be an effective deterrent to the amateur burglar. Make sure that your family understands how the alarm system operates and sounds. Notify your neighbors that you have installed an alarm and make sure that they are aware of the alarm's sound and that it is loud enough to be heard in their homes. Family and neighbors should be trained to call your police department when they hear the alarm.

If you live in a rural area or if most of your neighbors are gone during the day, you may wish to consider having a system with an automatic dialer to a central reporting station. This type of system is activated when your alarm goes off. An alarm responder will call your home to find out if it is a false alarm, requesting your password or other code. If no one answers, or if the proper response is not received, they will call your local police department. Be aware that you may be charged a \$25.00 false alarm fee per St. Louis County Ordinance 720.140 for each false alarm that the police department responds to. For further details concerning the Ordinance please contact the North County Precinct, Neighborhood Policing Unit.

Do not tip off burglars by telephone

Safe Practices

Burglars often try to find out if anyone is home by phoning. If you receive several suspicious "wrong number" calls or "no one-at-the-other-end" calls, notify your Neighborhood Policing Officer. Warn family members, especially children, not to give out information by phone - especially regarding who is home, who is out, or how long anyone is expected to be out.

If you use an answering machine or voice mail service, do not indicate on your greeting that you will be gone for a specific time. A more appropriate message is that you screen calls and sometimes you may be home or not.

If your name is in the telephone book, do not place your full name on the mailbox, door or apartment building roster. Use your first two initials and last name only. Your name on display makes it easier for the burglar to look your phone number up in the phone book.

Make it look as if you're home

Maintaining an appearance of occupancy even when your home is vacant is essential to thwarting burglary attempts.

Timers can automatically regulate television, radios, and the interior lighting of a home to create such a deception. Timers should be used while you are on vacation, when you are out to dinner or even during the day while you are at work.



One type of automatic timer has a 24-hour dial and allows you to set an on-and-off time to coincide with normal light usage in your home. These timers simply plug into the wall then the lamp you want to use is plugged into the timer.

For the most realistic deception, several timers should be used to simulate occupancy. For instance, a television and lamp in the living room might be on from 6:30 p.m. until 11:00 p.m. At 11:00 p.m., a lamp might go on in the bathroom until 11:30 p.m. and a bedroom lamp might go on from 11:00 p.m. to midnight. This would indicate to anyone watching the house that it was occupied.

During the day, leave drapes and shades in their normal position - the way you have them when at home. (And do not leave easily stolen valuables visible to persons outside!)

Do not advertise your vacation plans

Inform one or two people of your vacation plans - a trusted neighbor who can keep an eye on things while you are gone. Have your neighbor pick up your newspapers and other deliveries. (Do not inform any delivery people that you will be on vacation.) If you will be gone for more than a week, arrange to keep your lawn maintained and for your garbage container to be put out and brought in. Notify the North County Precinct to participate in the vacation inspection program.

Do not reward the burglar

If, despite your precautions, a burglar does get into your home, do not give him or her a "bonus" of cash or easily-carried jewelry. Never keep large sums of cash around the house. Keep valuable jewelry, that you do not wear often, in a safe deposit box.

House numbers

Make sure that police, fire, and paramedics can find your home in a time of emergency. Have your house numbers clearly mounted on a high contrast background. All residences and commercial businesses shall have the numbers of their street addresses conspicuously posted, using numbers not less than three (3) inches in height for addresses posted within fifty (50) feet of the street; six (6) inches for addresses posted within one hundred (100) feet of the street; and twelve (12) inches for addresses posted more than one hundred (100) feet from the street, so that providers of fire protection and other emergency services may better find the proper location when responding to an emergency call.

Emergency telephone numbers

Police, fire, and paramedic emergency telephone numbers should be listed on or programmed into each phone in your home.

If you discover a burglary has been committed, leave the house undisturbed and call the police department from a neighbor's home or your cell phone.



If you interrupt a burglar or if you see a prowler in or around your home, do not investigate yourself... call 911 immediately from a neighbor's home or a safe location.

Call **9-1-1** if an emergency situation threatens human life or property and demands immediate attention. Do not call 9-1-1 for non emergencies, this causes delays in the handling of "real" emergencies.

Protecting Your Property

Mark and record your property – Operation Identification

Many communities across the nation have experienced a reduction in burglaries by home owners simply marking their possessions. The program is known as "Operation Identification."

An inexpensive electric etching pencil or engraver - often available on loan from your local law enforcement agency — is used to engrave your personal property with your driver's license number. (Do not use your social security number. Federal law forbids the use of social security numbers to trace an individual.) Engrave your valuables with this information: "Stolen from MO ___ (insert your driver's license number here)." MO stands for Missouri. This allows law enforcement to trace the number. Inscribe on furniture, appliances, television, stereo components, guns, cameras, lawn equipment, tools, musical instruments, personal computers, etc. These words can be placed on the base or rear portion of the item without ruining the appearance of the item. Electric engraving pencils are as easy to write with as a ball point pen and are a worthy investment. Some small items, such as jewelry which cannot be marked, should be photographed. Larger items can be videotaped. Place your driver's license photo next to the item for easy ownership identification.

Extremely valuable jewelry should be appraised by a reputable appraiser. Place a description and listing of the items on the back of the photograph. In fact, you may wish to photograph or videotape each room in your house.

Once you have marked your property, record it on an inventory list. A sample inventory form appears on page 15 of this handbook. Put one copy of the list and photographs or videotape in your safe deposit box, fire-proof box, freezer portion of your refrigerator, or otherwise out of reach of a burglar.

Also, save receipts with the model and serial numbers of your higher value items and keep them with the inventory list. If you have a burglary, fire, storm or any other kind of loss, the list will help you remember what you had and the receipts will help you establish proof of their value for filing an insurance claim.

Update your inventory at least once a year to make sure newly-purchased items are added.

There is evidence that burglars avoid both homes and communities where Operation Identification is used.



Insure against theft

A homeowner's or renter's insurance policy provides basic economic protection against burglary and other types of theft. Policies designed for mobile homeowners and condominium owners serve the same purpose. If you do not already have such a policy, it is suggested you purchase one without delay. (Some insurance companies provide premium discounts if you take certain home security precautions, i.e., install dead bolt locks, participate in Operation Identification, etc.)

A typical homeowner's policy insures you against loss by burglary for up to 50 percent. Say, for example, your home is insured for \$100,000. You have \$50,000 in protection on the contents of your home, whether from burglary or another loss. If you rent, your burglary protection is the full amount stated in the policy.

Policies and insurance companies differ in their provisions. Many insurance companies offer "full replacement" compensation for stolen property, while others will pay for the loss on the basis of the property's replacement cost minus depreciation. There may also be a deductible applied to this coverage.

Valuable items - collections, furs, quality cameras, expensive jewelry - should be protected by an endorsement (sometimes called a floater) on your policy. This adds coverage on items beyond the limits that apply to certain kinds of property.

Any questions you have about theft coverage should be directed to your insurance agent.

Neighborhood Watch

Neighborhood Watch was created to obtain citizen involvement in discouraging and preventing residential crime. The program encourages citizens to secure their own homes and personal property. It also emphasizes the importance of calling the police when you see suspicious activity.

The two main principles of the St. Louis County Police Department's Neighborhood Watch Program are very simple.

- Encourage residents to properly secure their homes and belongings; and
- Immediately call the police when you see suspicious activity or become a victim of crime.

Contact the North County Precinct, Neighborhood Policing Unit for further details.



HOME SECURITY SURVEY

The St. Louis County Police Department is concerned about the safety and security of your home. As a service, the Department is providing you with this "Home Security Survey." Please take a few minutes to answer each question. Every "NO" checkmark indicates the need for corrective action and/or improvement in your home security. Remember, the survey only indicates vulnerabilities in your security. You have not improved your home security until the "NO's" are corrected. Complying with the suggestions will not make your property burglar proof; however, it will reduce the potential of becoming a victim. If you would like assistance completing this survey, call 314-438-4619 to schedule a free home security survey conducted by one of our police officers.

SAFE PRACTICES AND OPERATION IDENTIFICATION	Yes	No
Do you belong to a Neighborhood Watch Program?		
Do you keep a list of all valuable property?		
Do you have a list of the serial numbers of your electronic equipment (TV, computer, etc...)?		
Have you taken photographs or videotaped your jewelry, antiques, or collectibles?		
Do you keep excess cash and other valuables in a bank?		
Do you have a plan for being locked out other than hiding a key on your property?		
Have you told your family what to do if they discover a burglar breaking in or already in the house?		
Have you told your family to leave the house undisturbed and call the police if they discover a burglary has been committed?		
Do you have emergency phone numbers listed by your telephone?		
Do you know the non-emergency dispatch number to the police? (314) 889-2341		
Is your house number illuminated and easily visible from the street during all hours?		
Have you locked up your ladder, trash cans, or other objects that could be used by a burglar to climb to an elevated window?		

LIGHTING AND LANDSCAPE	Yes	No
Are lights installed around the perimeter of your house?		
Is the front door well lit?		
Is the back door well lit?		
Are your trees and shrubs trimmed to eliminate hiding places?		
Are large trees trimmed so the lower branches are more than (7) feet off the ground?		
Are ground plants under windows maintained at a height that is below the windowsill?		



DOORS AND ENTRY AREAS	Yes	No
Are your exterior doors of solid core construction?		
Do entry doors have a wide-angle optical viewer (peep hole)?		
Do exterior doors have cylinder-type deadbolt locks with at least one inch throw and beveled cylinder?		
Do the doors without cylinder locks have a heavy bolt or some similar secure device that can be		
Can all of your doors be securely locked?		
Are your locks all in good repair?		
Are the door strike plates installed with three-inch screws?		
Do you know everyone who has a key to your house?		
Do all out-swinging doors have a hinge with a locking pin or non-removable pins?		
Do sliding doors have an auxiliary lock that locks both the door panels together or active side to		
Do you close and lock your garage door whenever you are not in the garage?		
Do you lock your car and take the keys out when it is parked in your garage?		

WINDOWS	Yes	No
Are all windows equipped with auxiliary locks or pinned?		
Have you replaced or secured louvered windows?		
Are your window locks properly and securely mounted?		
Do you have garage windows covered with curtains or blinds?		
Are you as careful of basement and second floor windows as you are of those on the first floor?		
Have you removed items below windows that could be used to reach the window?		
Do you keep your windows covered at night so people can't see in your home?		
Can windows left open for ventilation be secured?		

VACATIONS	Yes	No
Did you stop all deliveries or arrange for a trusted neighbor or family member to pick up your		
Did you ask a trusted neighbor or relative to watch your residence while you are away?		
Did you arrange to keep your lawn maintained/ snow shoveled?		
Did you leave your vacation address and telephone number with a trusted neighbor so you can be		
Did you activate your burglar alarm?		
Did you turn the ringer on your telephone down low?		
Did you contact the St. Louis County Police Department for a Vacation check while you are away? Call the North County Precinct at 314-355-1200 or contact your Neighborhood Police Officer, see		



