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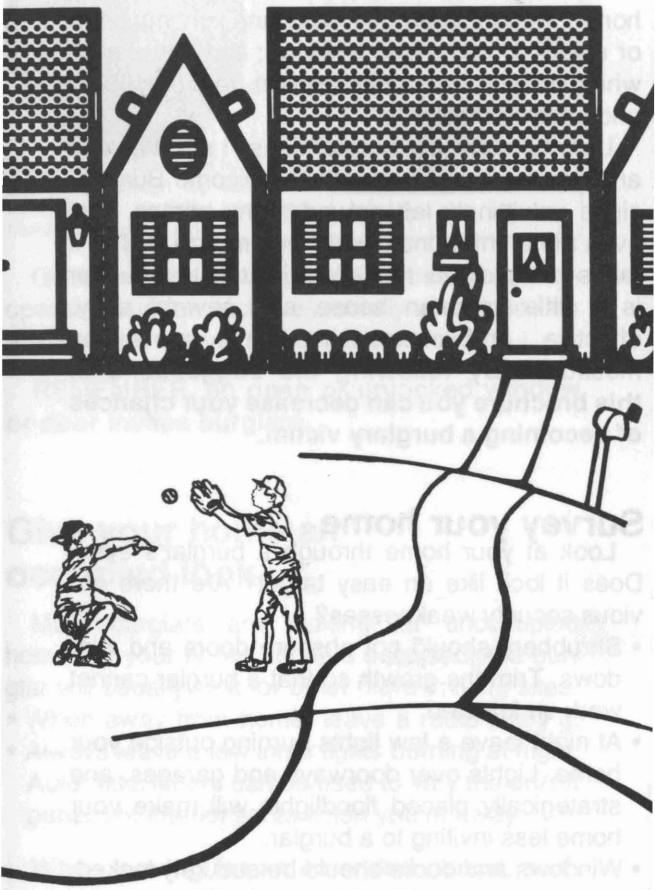

A Crime Prevention Guide To Home Security

The Texas A&M University System

Texas Agricultural Extension Service

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Don't give the burglar a helping hand

Most home burglars are amateurs looking for easy targets. They're looking for homes which present the least risk of detection; the greatest opportunity for easy gain; and the maximum potential for escape. They're looking for homes which appear unoccupied and unprotected; homes without adequate locks and lighting; open or unlocked doors and windows; and home sites which provide easy concealment from neighbors and passing motorists.

Unfortunately, the burglar doesn't need to look around very long to discover "Welcome Burglar" signs unwittingly left around many homes. It is even more unfortunate when you realize that all it takes to make your home less inviting to a burglar is a little common sense and several easy, effective, and inexpensive crime prevention measures. **By following the suggestions in this brochure you can decrease your chances of becoming a burglary victim.**

Survey your home

Look at your home through a burglar's eyes. Does it look like an easy target? Are there obvious security weaknesses?

- Shrubbery should not obscure doors and windows. Trim the growth so that a burglar cannot work undetected.
- At night leave a few lights burning outside your home. Lights over doorways and garages, and strategically placed floodlights will make your home less inviting to a burglar.
- Windows and doors should be securely locked. Inadequate locks should be replaced or supplemented.
- Make your home look occupied at all times.

Common sense is all that is needed to identify most security weaknesses around your home. To supplement your survey and for more complicated security problems, contact your local law enforcement agency about a **free home security survey**. At your request a Crime Prevention Officer will survey your home and give you his security recommendations.

What is a good lock?

DEADBOLT LOCK

Crime Prevention experts recommend DEADBOLT LOCKS to provide the security needed for exterior doors. The bolt should extend at least ONE INCH into the door frame to provide adequate security.

Many homes are equipped with spring-latch door locks. Most spring-latch locks can be easily jimmied by even the most inexperienced burglar. Replace or supplement any spring-latch locks with a good deadbolt lock.

SPRING-LATCH LOCK

Other good security locks such as the jimmy-resistant rim lock are available. Ask your Crime Prevention Officer about the best locks for your home.

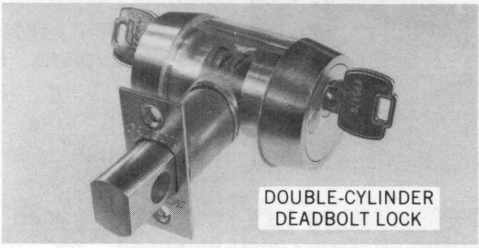
When you move into a new home, or if you lose your house keys, contact a locksmith to change the tumblers inside the lock. The change can be done quickly and inexpensively, and it makes the old or lost keys useless.

DON'T FORGET TO LOCK UP. Even the best locks provide no protection if left unlocked. Securely lock your home even if you plan to be away for only minutes.

Secure doors and windows

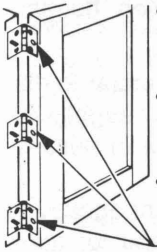
Wooden exterior doors have either Solid Core or Hollow Core construction. **SOLID CORE DOORS provide the greatest security**. They are best able to withstand attacks by burglars, and are best suited for the installation of good locks.

If an exterior door contains a glass panel or is near a window, you should install a **DOUBLE-CYLINDER DEADBOLT LOCK** which requires a key to unlock it from either side of the door. This lock will prevent a burglar from reaching inside to unlock the door after breaking the glass.

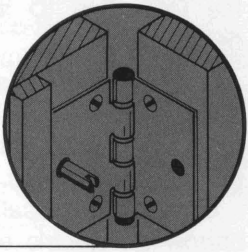


DOUBLE-CYLINDER DEADBOLT LOCK

Doors which swing open to the outside have exposed hinges in easy reach of the burglar. These doors can be secured by the "hinge pinning" technique illustrated.

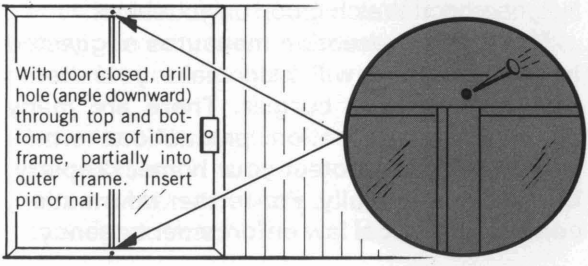


- Remove opposing screws from both sides of each hinge plate.
- Insert pin into hole on door FRAME, leaving a 1/2-inch protrusion.
- Drill out opposing hole to fit pin when door is closed.



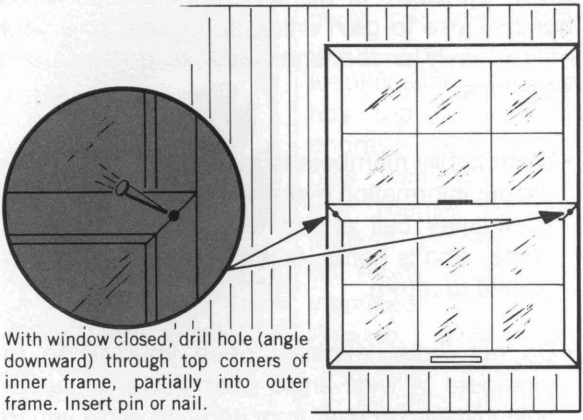
OPEN GARAGE DOORS ATTRACT BURGLARS. Make a habit of keeping garage doors closed and locked. An open garage door with no car in sight is a clear invitation to a burglar, especially if the garage is used to store such items as bicycles, power mowers, garden tools, and other easily stolen property.

SLIDING GLASS DOORS are particularly vulnerable to attacks by burglars. The "pinning" technique illustrated will prevent the lock from being forced or the door from being lifted from the track. Key-operated pins or grips are a preferred method of securing sliding glass doors.



With door closed, drill hole (angle downward) through top and bottom corners of inner frame, partially into outer frame. Insert pin or nail.

WINDOWS are another common entry point for burglars. Double-hung windows can be easily and inexpensively secured by using the "pinning" technique illustrated.



With window closed, drill hole (angle downward) through top corners of inner frame, partially into outer frame. Insert pin or nail.

Good security for windows is provided by key-operated window locks, especially when used as auxiliaries to conventional window locks.

REMEMBER, an open or unlocked window or door invites burglars.

Give your home an occupied look

Most burglars are looking for unoccupied homes. If your home appears occupied, the burglar will usually look for other more inviting sites.

- When away from home, leave a radio playing.
- Always leave a few inner lights burning at night. Automatic timers can be used to vary the on/off pattern of interior lights when you're away.

When leaving for an extended period, such as during a vacation, you should take several additional precautions.

- Ask a neighbor to keep an eye on your home.
- Stop newspaper deliveries.
- Ask a neighbor to pick up your mail.
- If necessary, arrange for lawn care.
- Notify your local law enforcement agency that you plan to be away. Most agencies will schedule periodic checks of your home, having been alerted to your absence and to the need for extra attention.

Use common sense

Common sense will help keep the burglar away. Be aware of the common methods which burglars use to gain entry, and make sure your entire family understands what to do in certain situations.

- Warn family members to be cautious about giving out information over the telephone. Burglars sometimes call ahead to learn if anyone is home, who is home, or when residents are expected to return.

- Do not indiscriminately open your home to strangers. A wide-angle door viewer or peephole installed in your front door will allow you to see who is outside without opening the door. Ask for positive identification from repairmen or solicitors who claim to have business inside your home. If you are suspicious about the caller, telephone his office for verification.

- When you admit a repairman or salesman do not leave him alone for even a few minutes.

- Don't let a stranger inside your home to use the telephone; make the call for him.

- Don't leave notes outside your home announcing your absence.

- Don't leave an extra key "hidden" outside your home.

- Don't leave your house keys with your car keys when you leave your car at a parking lot.

- Don't attach your name or license number to your house keys. Lost or stolen house keys which contain such information can be easily traced to your front door.

- Never keep large sums of cash or easily stolen valuables such as jewelry unprotected in your home. Keep valuables you don't often use in a safe deposit box.

Participate in Operation Identification

Operation Identification is a citizen's burglary prevention program. The Operation Identification program has two parts. First, engrave your valuables with your driver's license number. Marked property can be easily traced and identified as yours. Second, display an Operation ID window and door sticker which tells would-be burglars that your property has been marked. Marked property and the presence of the Operation ID sticker are proven burglary deterrents.

Marked property is difficult for a burglar to dispose of or re-sell. If a burglar is caught with marked property, it is solid evidence of possession of stolen goods.

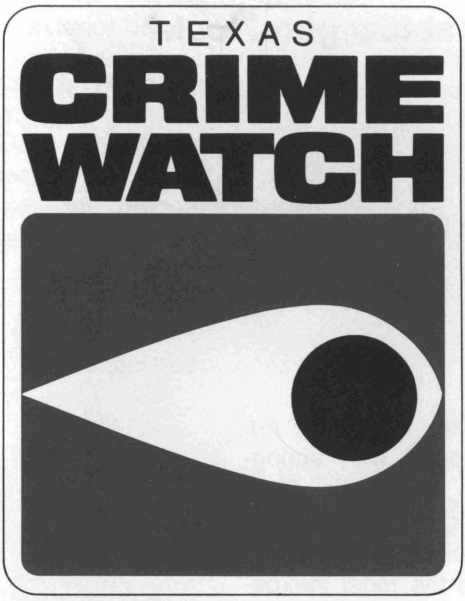
Contact your local law enforcement agency to borrow an electric engraving tool and for additional information about the Operation Identification program in your area.

Organize a Neighborhood Watch group

Many communities have formed **Neighborhood Watch** groups to protect themselves from burglars. Through a Neighborhood Watch organization, neighbors agree to keep an eye on each other's property and to report suspicious activities to the police.

Contact your local law enforcement agency for assistance in organizing and maintaining a Neighborhood Watch group on your block.

The Crime Prevention measures suggested in this brochure will help make your home less inviting to a burglar. There are many other crime prevention precautions which you can take to protect your home, property, business, and family. For further information, contact your local law enforcement agency.



This Crime Prevention Information Is From Your Local Law Enforcement Agency

In Cooperation With The Texas Crime Prevention Institute Southwest Texas State University