

HOME SECURITY CHECKS

Is your home as safe as it should be?

Most residential burglars devote little if any time to the advance planning of any specific break-in. Their crimes are, for the most part, crimes of opportunity. They pick what appears to be an easy mark. If their advance checking and closer examination reveal a greater risk than anticipated, they move onto a safer target. The more you can do to keep your home from looking like an easy target, the safer you are. There are also many steps that you can take to minimize your loss and improve your chances of recovery if a break-in does occur.

The first step in improving overall security is to take a hard look at the security measures already in use in your home. To help you with this task, the Tempe Police Department has developed a Home Security Survey. Conducting a security survey is important. Go through the test carefully. Look at your house at night as well as in the daytime. Remember, the test points out security weaknesses around your home. Your home cannot be adequately protected until these weaknesses are corrected.

Don't "welcome" a burglar into your home.

- Landscaping and Yard
- Security Street Numbers
- Exterior and Interior Lighting
- House and Garage Doors
- Locks, Strike Plates and Hinges
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Landscaping and Yard Security

A few alterations to your landscaping can be enough to put off intruders. To avoid getting caught, intruders look for property they can get into and out of quickly. Their ideal target is a house surrounded by large hedges and shrubs, which hamper visibility from the street and neighbors' houses.

Bushes, Shrubs and Trees: Trim shrubbery and trees so doors and windows are visible to neighbors, and from the street. Trimmed landscaping should not provide concealment for criminals. If you have a second floor, prune trees so they can't help a

thief climb in second floor windows. Place trellises where they can't be used as ladders to gain entry to the upper floors.

- Ground plants (shrubbery and bushes) within four (4) feet of any sidewalks, driveways, doors or gates, should be maintained at a height of not more than two (2) feet.
- Ground plants between four (4) and eight (8) feet of any sidewalks, driveways, doors, or gates, should be maintained at a height of not more than four (4) feet.
- Ground plants under windows should be maintained at a height that is below the window sill.
- Trees should be trimmed so that the lower branches are more than six (6) feet off the ground.

Place large gauge gravel on the ground near windows. The noise caused by intruders walking on it can become a psychological deterrent. DO NOT place river rocks or other items near glass windows or doors. You do not want to provide the burglar with his tools!

Plant spiny (thorny) plants along fences and under windows. Such plants will discourage even the most nimble intruder. Protecting with spiny plants is as effective as the use of barbed wire, and a lot more attractive.

Street Numbers

Street numbers should be easily visible from the street. Critical time can be saved by emergency responders when the street address for the house is visible from a distance.

On your house:

- Keep numbers new and clean and replace when necessary.
- The numbers should be placed under a light and near the front door or garage entrance.

Limited or Direct Access to Yards and Store Rooms:

Intruders look for no or few obstacles blocking quick exits. Fences prevent burglars from carrying away large items if the gates are locked. Gates should be locked at all times, even when you are home!

Ladders and tools should be stored in a garage or storage shed, and these areas should be locked.

Landscaping should also be designed to control access to your property. Proper barriers make the person with criminal intent feel uncomfortable as he or she approaches your home or business.

Exterior and Interior Lighting

It is a known fact, that good lighting is a deterrent to crime. While any lighting will help reduce your risk of becoming of a victim, the proper lights, used correctly will be the most effective deterrent to criminal activity.

Exterior

Exterior lights are important, especially near doors and in the rear of the house, where intruders do most of their work. All sides of your home should be protected by security lighting that is located high out of reach, and is vandal resistant.

Lighting in carports and garages is critical. For garages, an automatic garage opener is the best choice. Almost every garage door opener made today has a light that comes on when the opener is activated, lighting the garage interior. In carports, it is best to leave a light on, have a light on a timer, or have a light connected to a motion sensor or photo electric cell.

The best light to use on the exterior is a motion detector type of fixture. The advantage to this type of light, especially in the backyard, is that the light warns the resident that someone is in their yard. While there is a concern that dogs, cats, or birds will trigger the sensor and cause the lights to come on, if the resident sets the sensitivity of the sensor correctly this will not be a problem. In the front yard, any type of lighting will be effective, as long the lighting pattern covers the entire front and sides of the house. Sensor lighting will be effective, but is more prone to "false alarms" caused by things like people walking down the sidewalk, or children playing.

Interior

When residents go out for an evening, they usually leave on their "burglar beacon". A burglar beacon is a small light that is left on so they don't walk into a darkhouse when they come home. These are lights like the one above the kitchen sink or stove, the hallway light, or a light in the corner of the living room. Unfortunately these lights are a signal for the criminal that no one is home. If you go out for an evening leave a radio and several lights on. When you go on vacation put at least two lights, in different parts of the house, and a radio on timers.

House and Garage Doors

Entry doors should be solid core wood (at least 1 3/4" thick) or metal wrapped. Your door should fit its frame tightly, with no more than 1/8" clearance between the door and the frame. If the gap is too big, replace the door or bolt a sturdy metal strip to the door edge. You will boost your protection, and save energy too.

Most hollow core doors can be easily broken through. If the door is flimsy or weak, or doesn't fit securely into the frame, it offers little protection, no matter what locks you use.

Doors with decorative glass panels or windows are easy marks. It takes only seconds to break the glass and unlock the door. If you do not want to replace such doors, install a

break-resistant plastic panel, such as Lexan®, or decorative grille over the glass. Attach the grill with special non-removable screws.

For the best protection, install a wrought iron security door over your front door. Wrought iron doors not only provide an extra level of visible security against a break-in, they also allow you to open your front door to strangers, or leave the front door open for ventilation.

Your garage door should be securely locked at all times (even when you are home). Keeping it locked is just as important as keeping your home locked, especially if the garage is attached to the home. Once inside the garage a burglar can work uninterrupted at getting into the house.

If you install a "doggie door" be sure it is not a way in for burglars as well as the dog. Do not be complacent by the fact that you have a small dog. Burglars come in all sizes!

Locks, Strike Plates and Hinges

Locks/Deadbolts

The "lock-in-knob" offers you privacy and convenience but it does not offer security from intruders. In fact many "lock-in-knob" locks can be opened by using a simple credit card. You may have privacy, but you don't have security.

All exterior doors require the use of a deadbolt lock. When you turn the key the locking mechanism slides a strong metal bolt from the door into the door's frame.

When you buy a deadbolt lock, MAKE SURE:

- The bolt extends at least 1" into the front edge of the door.
- The strike plate is attached through the trim to the door frame with screws at least 3" long.
- It has a rotation case hardened shroud that prevents it from being twisted off with a pair of pliers or other tools.

The two most common types of deadbolts:

Single Cylinder Deadbolts – Have a thumb turn on the interior side. They are convenient to use and may speed up the exit process in the event of fire. If used near a window they can be opened by breaking the window and reaching through. This type of deadbolt lock does not prevent the burglar from taking your property out through the door.

Double Cylinder Deadbolts – Utilize keys on both sides. This type of lock should be considered if there is glass window within 40" of the lock. However, this type of lock does present a potential fire escape hazard. This type of deadbolt lock can delay a burglar that wants to use the door to remove your property from your home.

Keys

As many as half of all burglaries take place without forced entry. Many times the burglar uses a key. Be sure your keys don't fall into the wrong hands.

- Never carry identification on your key ring or holder.
- Re-key all locks when you move into a new house or apartment.
- Know who has keys to your home. Do not give keys to maintenance or deliver people. If you must leave a key behind, leave it with a trusted neighbor. Make sure that each member of your family knows where his or her key is.
- Never hide a key outside. Burglars know all the hiding places.
- Do not hang keys on hooks within plain view inside your home.

Strike

Plate

The strike plate is attached to the door frame with screws. The metal bolt of the deadbolt lock slides into the strike plate to secure the door soundly to the door frame.

A high security strike plate is required to keep the metal bolt from being kicked from the door frame when locked. A high security strike plate should have at least 4 screws that are a minimum of 3 inches long.

Hinges

Hinges are often installed with the same 3/4" screws as the common strike plates. Replace these with 2" to 3" fully threaded screws so the hinges are anchored to the sub-frame.

In some cases the hinges are installed in such a manner that the hinge pins are exposed to the exterior and an intruder may attempt to remove the pins in an effort to gain entry.

Hinges can be pinned by installing a partially threaded screw into the frame side of the hinge. The unthreaded portion of the screw is left exposed and the head of the screw is cut off. A corresponding hole is drilled into the door and hinge on the opposite side, so when the door is closed the exposed portion of the screw fits in to the door. This will prevent the door from the being lifted out.

Arcadia Doors and Sliding Glass Windows

People often install sturdy locks on their front doors but leave arcadia (sliding glass) doors and sliding glass windows "wide open" to illegal entry. Burglars look for both of these because they are easy to open. Usually, arcadia doors and windows are more secluded than a front door, making a perfect place for burglars to hide and enter. Two factors must be protected against.

Prying the Lock

Most arcadia doors and sliding windows come equipped with a lock that is easily pried open. A supplemental lock must be installed.

Broomsticks (they should fit snug), "Charlie bars" and finger operated locks provide some protection.

Key locking devices are much preferred because they can prevent the burglars from using the door or window to remove stolen property.

There are several types of supplemental locks available. Keyed locks may be keyed alike with other entry lock sets and deadbolts. Check with your locksmith or hardware store and select a sturdy type that most suits your home.

Lifting Out

Many arcadia doors and sliding windows can be lifted out of their tracks from the outside.

Two sheet metal screws placed in the track above the removable part of the door or window can prevent it from being removed. Adjust the screws so that the doors or window will just clear underneath them.

Drill a hole and insert a nail through the inside frame and part way through the metal door frame. You can remove the nail but the burglar can't.

Double Hung Windows

To secure a double hung window; drill a downward sloping hole into the top of the bottom window, and through that into the bottom of the top window. A pin can now be inserted, locking the window shut.

By partly opening the window (less than 4 inches) and making a second set of holes, the window can then be used for ventilation. Remember, open windows and doors, even if secured, should never be left unattended while you are gone or asleep.

Security Alarms

Do you keep extremely valuable property (jewelry, television sets, computers, other electronic equipment, etc.) in your house? Do you often leave your house unattended for more than a few hours (go to work or school for example), or do you want more protection? These are reasons to invest in a quality alarm system.

Many quality alarm systems are available. Before you purchase a security system, you should have in mind what kind of system you want. This will prevent buying more equipment than you actually need. Read as much about different brands and types of systems as you can. Talk to friends and neighbors that have alarm systems. We recommend that you speak to at least three security alarm companies about their product and service prior to purchasing any alarm system. Remember, you get what you pay for in many cases.

Choosing Your System

Common questions asked by people considering an alarm system:

- How do I know the right company to choose when considering the purchase of an alarm system?
- How much protection do I need?
- How much should I expect to pay?

Tips to help when choosing an alarm company

- Ask about insurance...general liability, workman's compensation, and errors and omissions. You have every right to ask for certificates of insurance for these items. This protects you! because if the company is not properly protected, the claim or loss falls on you!
- Ask for the company's city business license, which allows them to do business in your community.
- Ask for local referrals of other customers in your area that have had systems installed like the one being proposed to you.
- Check your contract! Review carefully what you sign, make sure everything is agreed upon in writing. Know what the warranty period is and what is included in the warranty.
- Remember, an adequate design should consider the structure, the lifestyle, the perceived needs and the budget of the occupant.
- Ask if the company has been established for 3–5 years.
- Ask if it is going to be monitored locally or outside of the state of Arizona
- Be sure the company does the entire installation and don't subcontract work out.

Other Home Security Information

Home Inventory List

Keep a "Personal Property Inventory List" in a safe place, possibly with your insurance papers. This helps to recover stolen property in the event of a theft or burglary. Keep a duplicate copy in a safe deposit box or other safe place.

The more complete your inventory list is the better. In case of a loss by causes other than theft it may help you establish your loss with your insurance company. As an example, if you have a fire in your residence and lose a couch, an end table and a portion of your carpet in your front room, the accurate listing of when and how much you're paid for the items will assist you in establishing your loss.

On the inventory list indicate the room the property was located in. Make the description of the item as complete as possible. Include the manufacturer model number, size, color, and the material the item is made of. This list might include damage marks, repairs, etc. Make sure to list the manufacture's serial number on the list. Do not confuse the model with the serial number.

If you mark your property with a personal number, use your Arizona Driver License number, not your social security, unless they are the same.

Safety Tips at Home

- If you are bothered by obscene calls, hang up immediately and dial *57. This will record the location of the last call to your phone, with the phone company. Then contact the phone company and make a harassing calls complaint.
- Always be observant of your surroundings
- If you live alone don't use your marital status or first name on your telephone listing or on your mail box.
- Get to know your neighbors.
- When returning home, or to your car, have your keys in your hand so that you can let yourself in without delay.
- If you think you're being followed, don't go home! Go to an open business. If you are still being followed call the police from there.
- Park your car in well lighted areas. Lock the doors and take the keys.
- If you think a prowler is threatening, take no direct action yourself, dial 911 immediately.

Do's and Don'ts

Do's

- Use the security devices you have.
- Leave lights on inside and out when you go out for the evening.
- Have the police and fire department telephone number near your telephone.
- Carry only what is absolutely necessary in your purse.
- Check with the manager before letting repairmen in your apartment.
- Close your drapes in the evening hours.
- Be suspicious of people loitering around your house, apartment complex, or the parking lot.
- Call the police if you see anything suspicious.

Don'ts

- Don't keep large sums of money in your home.
- Don't carry large sums of money while you are out
- Don't let strangers in to "use your telephone."
- Don't undress in front of open windows.
- Don't leave notes on your door.
- Don't hide a key (leave one with a trusted neighbor).
- Don't display expensive equipment or items in plain view through your window.

- Don't use your name or telephone number on your answering machine message.
Use a generic message that does not state that you are not home.
- Don't answer personal questions on telephone surveys.
- Don't admit "service reps" from utilities unless you have an appointment or can verify their authenticity.