

# Burglary

Household burglary – everyone knows it happens, but until it happens to you, it's hard to imagine what you'll do. If it does happen, it can wreak havoc – financial, physical or psychological. Yet many people don't take their security seriously. They take risks, assuming that it always happens to someone else first.

## DOES THIS DESCRIPTION FIT YOU?

Do you:

- Leave doors and windows open when you leave the house?
- Leave side gates and garden sheds unlocked?
- Hide keys outside, under a mat, on a ledge or under a flowerpot?
- Leave valuables unprotected and visible to strangers?

If so, you are taking risks that could easily be avoided.

## SIMPLE STRATEGIES TO FOIL A BURGLAR

There are many things you can do to reduce the risk of becoming a victim. It isn't necessary to convert your home into a fortress. However, in today's society security is now part of contemporary American life. Here are some simple strategies that can be adopted to ensure our homes and communities are more secure.

### Here are some ways to reduce the risk of home burglaries:

1. **Always lock up.** Don't overlook the obvious. Doors and windows should be locked, not only when we leave the house, but even when we are elsewhere in the house or the garden.
2. **Cut away the camouflage.** Burglars love camouflage. Trees, shrubs, walls and fences can provide coverage for an intruder. Keep bushes around doors and windows trimmed.
3. **Deadbolt the main door.** The main door is the most likely point of entry. A key-operated deadbolt on a reinforced door is the safest option. If intruders get into your home through another entry, a key-operated deadbolt on the main door will make it difficult for them to carry stolen goods out. Wherever possible, install a security screen door and a peephole.

4. **Synchronize door locks.** Install the same key-operated lock system on all other doors - it makes locking up easier. Sliding glass doors should be bolted top and bottom or fit-ted with a specifically designed deadbolt.
5. **Secure all windows.** All windows should be secured with keyed locks or security grates.
6. **Light up at night.** Keep doors, windows, and pathways well-lit at night. Movement-activated sensor lights are highly recommended.
7. **Lock the side gates.** Side gates should also be se-curely locked.
8. **Get a dog.** Consider keeping a dog or at least think about hanging a 'beware of the dog' sign at any outside gates.
9. **Install alarms.** Security alarms are highly visible and au-dible; and back-to-base alarms can be linked to a security service that monitors and responds to their call.
10. **Lock garden sheds and garages.** Garden sheds and garages should be kept padlocked. If there is a connecting door between the garage and your house, ensure it is al-ways locked.
11. **Plan ahead for absences or vacations.** An empty house invites burglars. Never leave your house obviously unoccupied. Put lights and radios on a timer, and install outside sensors that are movement-activated. Arrange for someone to clear out your mailbox and park a car in your driveway occasionally. Cancel all deliveries such as news-papers. Lock away the trash cans.
12. **Prepare for an emergency.** Ensure your house num-ber is clearly visible from the road as it assists emergency services to find your house quickly.

## **A FEW FACTS ABOUT BURGLARS**

Most home burglars are opportunists. They see an opportunity and take it.

Burglaries reported to the Oneonta Police Department indicate that burglars entered through an unlocked or broken door or window. Their primary targets are expensive items that are highly portable and easy to dispose of – like televisions, dvd players, iPods, laptops, cash, credit cards, pocketbooks, wallets, jewelry, tools, prescription drugs, and clothing – especially high-end clothing.

## **PROTECTING YOUR PROPERTY**

List all your valuable items – remember anything small, valuable and easily moved is fair game for burglars. Re-cord the details of each item including the make, model, size, color, serial number and original cost. Having a list will enable you to identify what is missing and assist police by giving a full description of the missing property.

## **Mark your property**

It is harder for burglars to sell property with personal identification and if police recover marked property, it's easier to claim your items. You can mark your goods with an ultraviolet pen or have them engraved.

Photograph small valuable items (e.g. watches or jewelry) for easy identification using a ruler in the photograph to indicate size. Keep the photographs with your property list to help with identification and insurance claims.

## **PROPERTY INVENTORY**

You should keep a detailed inventory of all your valuable property, especially those things which are most likely to be stolen. You should mark and record details, such as serial number, make, model, color, size and original cost of the following items:

### **INSIDE THE HOME**

- Televisions
- Video equipment and DVD players
- Gaming consoles
- Binoculars
- Stereos and CDs
- MP3 players
- DVDs and electronic games
- Microwaves
- Cameras
- Kitchen appliances
- Sporting goods
- Musical instruments
- Computer equipment
- Sewing machines
- High-end clothing

### **OUTSIDE THE HOME**

- Power tools and tool boxes
- Lawn mowers
- Trailers
- Chainsaws
- Garden tools
- Bicycles
- Welders
- Sporting equipment
- Boats

Keep a separate list of your possessions – and the photos – in a safe place with your list. Not only will this help you if you have to report a theft to your insurance company, but it will also assist you and the police to identify what is yours if the property is recovered.

## **ENGRAVING OR ETCHING**

Engraving or etching is suitable for many hard surfaces and can be done using an electric engraving tool or a hand engraver. This method leaves a visible and permanent mark.

## **ULTRA VIOLET OR 'INVISIBLE' MARKING**

An ultra-violet (UV) pen can put an invisible mark on your property which can only be seen using a UV lamp. Remember that the mark can fade in time, especially when exposed to sunlight, and can be washed off, so it needs renewing regularly.

The best identification to use is your driver's license number preceded by the initials of your State (for example NY 1234567).

## **HELPING YOU TO RECOVER FROM THE EXPERIENCE**

Being a victim of burglary can be a frightening and unsettling experience and can be particularly difficult for children to deal with. It is normal to feel upset after your home has been broken into. Although most people underestimate the shock that burglary can cause, the emotional or psychological impact can be as significant as its financial cost. The experience can be intimidating and the fact that there is often no direct recourse is an additional frustration.

## **WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE BURGLARIZED?**

If you suspect someone is inside your home, do not go inside. Go to a neighbor's house and call the police on 911.

If you see an intruder leaving, make a note or memorize a description of him/her, the vehicle and tag number.

If the burglar has gone, do not touch anything. It may need to be fingerprinted.

Itemize what has been taken. Keep notes, you may even notice items missing several days after the burglary.

Contact your insurance company and contact your bank if credit cards and check books have been stolen.

Evaluate the security areas in your house: windows, doors and lights.

Install deadbolts.

Hinge doors so no pins can be removed from the outside.

Consider increasing the security of your windows by installing locks.

For sliding windows and doors purchase a slide lock with a key. These are designed to prevent patio type doors from being forced open.

Consider having a peephole installed in your outside door. You will not have to open your door to determine the identity of your visitor.

When you move into a new home, have new locks installed.

Proper and creative lighting of your premises and home not only makes you feel secure but makes your property safer.

If you are away from your home, use timers on various lights within your home to give the 'message' that your residence is inhabited. It can also be useful to leave a radio or TV playing to give the impression that someone is home.