



For July and August the focus is on home burglary. These are prime months when home burglary occurs.

## HOME BURGLARY AWARENESS AND PREVENTION

*Last month, SecurAlert focused on what you can do to better protect yourself and your family during the summer months. This month, we thought we would continue this theme and focus on home burglary prevention*

### The Statistics

Our research for this month's issue found a lot of new and interesting facts about home burglaries and their criminals. Knowing this information can help you in better protecting your home or apartment and being more aware of who the criminal is and how he or she strikes.

Each year, there are over 2.2 million burglaries in the US, which means that every 15 seconds, a burglary is committed. Home burglaries account for 70% of these crimes and typically spike during the summer months (July and August have the highest number of home burglaries). Regionally, the south accounts for 47% of burglaries (the relatively warmer weather is a key contributor of this). The Midwest and West each account for 21% of burglaries, and the Northeast accounts for the remaining 11%. Interestingly, the State of Ohio experiences the most burglaries in the country.



Most burglaries occur between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., since that's a prime timeframe where many homes are not occupied.



The majority of burglaries don't involve violence or the use of a weapon, but victims can feel traumatized for months after a break-in, not only for the loss of their property but the uneasy feeling that a criminal was in their home and the fear that he or she may return. Most "burglars" just want to break into your home, find something of value and get out as quickly as they can. In fact, the timeframe within which a burglary is committed is between 90 seconds and 12 minutes, according to the FBI! But the typical commission time is between 8 and 10 minutes.

The average dollar loss from a burglary in the United States is just over \$2,000, and the most common items stolen include cash, jewelry, guns, drugs and small electronics (such as I-pads, smart phones, I-pods, etc.). These items can be carried away easily, immediately used by the criminal and/or fenced to another criminal or to a pawn shop; hence, their attractiveness to the bad guy.

Because most burglaries are not witnessed and many burglars don't leave behind fingerprints or other physical evidence, the average arrest rate for burglaries in the United States is only 13%. This means that if your home is broken into, the chances of recovering your stolen possessions or of the perpetrator doing time for the break-in are small.

## Profiling the Average Burglar



The typical burglar lives within 2 miles of the victim, and, in fact may know the victim. This is one more reason to be careful about whom you let into your house.

- Most burglars are male and are under 25 years of age (usually mid to late teens).
- The typical burglar is not the smooth, cool, dapper (even charming) professional you see on TV or in the movies – hardly! They are thugs looking for an easy score and can be very sloppy in terms of how they break into and ransack a home. Most use ordinary household tools to break into a home including, screwdrivers, channel-lock pliers, small pry bars and hammers. Many times, they just use brute force to go through a door or window.
- Most have an arrest record usually for robbery, assault or drug-related offenses so although they are typically not prone to violence, when surprised or confronted by an occupant they could attack.



The lesson here is to lower your risk, you need to “harden the target” so your home is more difficult to enter.



## Are you at Risk?



Burglars want an easy target where they won't likely be seen and where they can get in and out FAST! So they select an unoccupied home with the easiest access, the greatest amount of cover and a great escape route.

- Single-family, detached homes are the most likely targets for burglars. This is logical because there are generally more access points and more places for a burglar to hide around a house. Homes in the center of the block are more likely to be burglarized than corner houses. This may be due to the extra visibility of houses on corner lots and the greater likelihood of vehicle traffic on cross-streets.
- A home without a home security system is three times more likely to be broken into than a home with a security system. Many thieves will avoid yards with alarm signs in them even if they're not sure the home is actually alarmed!
- Students are most likely to be burglary victims (perhaps due to possession of the latest electronics or the company they keep, since most burglars are under 25), with elderly people next most likely (possibly due to possession of prescription medications). Middle-aged people are least likely to be burglary victims.



*Crime analysts with the Federal Bureau of Investigation have determined that almost 90% of home burglaries can be prevented by putting in place some basic defenses that will make your home less attractive for a criminal*



## PREVENTION

- *These defenses can deter or delay a criminal's intent to break in and/or will assist in the apprehension of the criminal if a break-in does actually occur.*
- *This section of SecurAlert discusses the basic components of "target hardening" your home to include, alarm systems, doors and locks and some general tips, particularly when you and your family are away on vacation. Use this information to conduct a crime prevention survey of your home. Many of the suggestions are low cost and easily available. You also may share this issue with your relatives, friends and neighbors!*

## ALARM SYSTEMS

- Homes without a home-security/alarm system have a significantly higher break-in rate, so invest in an alarm system to protect your home ... and use it. Many homeowners have a system but fail to arm it when they go out and rarely activate the system's "night mode" when they go to bed (on average, only 10% of homeowners arm their alarm systems at night).
- Most of us ignore the sirens of car and house alarms because they go off regularly and we just assume they are false alarms, so make sure your house alarm is connected to an alarm monitoring station to ensure someone will respond and notify you of the alarm activation.
- Consider purchasing a system that will actually yell out in an urgent voice the exact location of the break in, in addition to sounding a siren (e.g., "INTRUSION DETECTED: REAR DOOR"); that way the system will attract the attention of neighbors and encourage the thief to leave since his exact location has been announced!



## ALARM SYSTEMS

- Consider a security system equipped with motion detectors in addition to door and window alarm sensors. Certain alarm systems allow your home to have separate zones so specific areas can always stay armed. Also, a panic button can be hooked up to your alarm system's central server for added protection inside your home.
- You also may want to check with your alarm company about installing CCTV surveillance cameras by the front and rear of your home. Today, many of these are inexpensive and their cost can be included in your monthly alarm monitoring fee. They also provide a tremendous deterrent, aid in the apprehension of a burglar who attempts entry and can be monitored by you electronically through the internet no matter where you are – offering you 24/7 piece of mind.
- Reflective numbers outside on the front of your home will make it easy for police, fire and EMS to find your house in the event of alarm activation or 911 call.
- If you do have a system, put out an alarm sign. Some homeowners think that these signs are unsightly but if you don't have a sign, you run the risk of a criminal attempting to break in your home. Even if the alarm goes off, the criminal will have the opportunity to grab a few items of value before the police can respond (and sometimes this response could be delayed).
- And don't forget to put out two alarm signs – one in front of the house AND one in the rear of the house (where most criminals will try to get in).
- Finally, make sure your alarm call list is up to date. Usually, the alarm company will ask for a primary contact and two secondary contact numbers...
- ..And be careful to whom you give your alarm codes and keys; some alarms now allow you to give each individual their own code so as to monitor their use.

## DOORS AND LOCKS

*Doors and windows are the primary means criminals get into your house! The most common way the amateur burglar attempts entry is to kick open one of your doors. Did you know that the weakest point on a door is the lock strike plate that holds the latch or lock bolt in place? Usually this strike plate is secured only by soft-wood doorjam molding and can be torn away quickly with a firm kick.*

To prevent or make it extremely difficult for a criminal to force his way into your home consider these suggestions:

- Use a solid core or metal door for all entrance points.
- Use a quality, heavy-duty deadbolt lock with a one-inch throw bolt.



*Make sure your garage door has a good dead bolt on it – a garage door is usually one of the weakest points for a criminal to use to get into your house*



## DOORS AND LOCKS

- Use a quality, heavy-duty knob-in-lock set with a dead-latch mechanism.
- Use a heavy-duty, four-screw, strike plate with 3-inch screws that penetrate into the wooded door frame.
- Install a wide-angle 360 degree peephole mounted no higher than 58 inches to provide maximum visibility.
- If you have or want front entry glass doors, consider installing decorative or “privacy” glass to prevent (or at the very least minimize) the would-be robber from peering inside your home to see if anyone maybe home and sizing up what items you have that are ripe for stealing; ask for reinforced glass that makes it challenging to break.
- Lock your doors and windows when you are away...even if you are just driving to do an errand; it just takes seconds for a burglar to strike and many burglars will “case” or observe a homeowner’s patterns and when they leave.
- Keep your car locked even when it’s in the garage.
- Make sure garage lights can be turned on from inside the house or have a sensor that is triggered by your vehicle so you don’t have to walk into a dark garage.
- Change your garage-door opener code!!! Did you know that new openers come with factory-set codes that are meant to be changed, but many people neglect to do so? Burglars will drive around neighborhoods with common brands of remote openers, looking for garage doors that will open.



## SLIDING GLASS PATIO DOORS



*These are also a common entry point for burglars. Why? First they are usually non-reinforced glass and many times do not have blinds or drapes covering them so the burglar has visibility into your home (and your possessions). Secondly, they can be easily opened from the outside because they typically have poor hardware and defective latches.*

Consider the following:

- Install a wooden dowel or stick into the door track.
- Install a “Charlie bar”, which is a metal folding down blocking device to hold the doors in place and prevent sliding.
- Install an anti-lift device which will prevent a criminal from lifting up sliding glass door or forcing it open horizontally.
- Place a decal on the outside of the glass indicating that you have an alarm system installed.
- Check EVERY time you leave the house that your sliding glass doors are secured. Kids love to run in and out of these doors during the summer and a door that appears shut may have been left unlocked by little Billy or Sally!

## WINDOWS



*Windows also are a common entry point for the criminal. Windows are left unlocked and open at a much higher rate than doors – particularly in warmer weather. Windows typically have latches not locks to secure them, so they can easily be compromised.*

Consider the following:

- Secure all accessible windows (at the very least on your basement and first floor levels) with secondary locks that can be purchased inexpensively at any hardware store.
- Block the opening of a window no more than six inches so even if a window is left open, the burglar will have a hard time gaining access.
- Consider anti-lift devices, just like sliding glass doors, to prevent a window from being lifted out.



*Make sure privacy fences don't provide cover for the burglar to break into a side or rear window or door*



## AROUND YOUR HOME

- Keep ladders, garbage cans, building supplies and tools locked up out of view so you don't provide an intruder with the means to break into your home.
- Never put your name on your mailbox. Anyone can call directory assistance, get your number, and find out you aren't home.
- Don't hide a spare key near your front door; burglars know all the hiding places. Leave a spare key with a trusted neighbor instead.
- Trim shrubs and trees so they do not provide hiding places for an intruder or hide visibility to windows and doors. Remove tree limbs that could allow someone to climb to an upper-story window or balcony.
- Keep all points of entry to your home well-lit. Consider installing motion-sensor lights on the rear and sides of your home and position them in out-of-reach places so they can't easily be turned off by a would-be thief.
- Consider hiding valuables in your kitchen or a child's room – that's the last place a bad guy will go; so stash expensive jewelry inside empty cereal boxes or other containers, especially if you will be out of town for a while..or consider a floor safe that is securely bolted to a floor or home structure.



*NEVER, NEVER, NEVER announce your vacation plans on social media sites; this is an open invitation for criminals who monitor these sites or even a dishonest social media "friend" to come visit your home when you are away*



## HOME SAFETY WHILE ON VACATION

*When you go on vacation, the burglar is just getting up for work!*

- The biggest mistake homeowners make is putting a timer on one or two lights and setting these to go on and off at exactly the same time every day – this is a telltale sign that no one is home!
- Set lights on timers or light sensors to turn on and off in the evening – place these in several locations in your home that can be seen from outside. The times the lights go on and off should vary by room to simulate someone actually home.
- Suspend newspaper delivery so papers don't pile up in front of your house.
- Put your mail on hold.
- Tell your neighbors you will be away so they can notify the police if they see suspicious activity.
- Ask a neighbor to keep an eye on your house and pick up any mail, fliers, newspapers, packages, etc.
- If you use a yard service, make sure they come to your house while you're away. An overgrown lawn is a good sign that no one is home.
- Let your alarm service know you will be away so they notify the police department immediately if they get an alarm signal from your home (as opposed to calling you first to verify the alarm).
- Leave a car in your driveway, or ask a neighbor to park there.



- Don't record a new message on your home answering machine indicating where you are or how long you'll be away. You'll be issuing an open invitation for someone to rob your house.
- Leave shades, curtains and blinds in their normal positions. Covered windows during the daytime (when they are normally open) indicate an empty house.
- When returning from your vacation, make a perimeter sweep of your home before you go inside to inspect for any indication of a break-in; if you see an open or broken door or window or evidence of a burglary, immediately call 911 – DO NOT ENTER THE HOUSE.

## "My Friend Flicker!"

The most creative invention SecurAlert recently discovered in our research for this issue was a device that simulates the flicker of a color television. Yep, you heard right.

The light this device emits is realistic in that it is sourced from multicolored LED's behind prism lenses that diffuse the light into the room, reflecting off the walls, ceiling, and windows. The randomness of the flickering is extraordinarily similar that of a real TV. The intensity changes, the color and hue changes, and the speed at which the flickering happens is identical to scene changes on TV... some rapid, some slower.

The "Fake TV" has several settings that work with a switch and/or light sensor that knows when it is getting dark in the room. It can be set to run for 4-hours or 7-hours after dusk. You may choose to connect the Fake TV to a 24-hour timer so that you can adjust the same time of night when you would normally be watching TV.

*Google, "Fake TV" and you will see a variety of models, prices and purchasing sources!*

[www.crimedoctor.com](http://www.crimedoctor.com)  
[www.homesecuritysource.com](http://www.homesecuritysource.com)  
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