

NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY AND SECURITY

1. COMMUNITY WATCH

Community members only serve as the extra “eyes and ears” of law enforcement. They should report their observations of suspicious activities to law enforcement; however, citizens should never try to take action on those observations. Trained law enforcement should be the only ones ever to take action based on observations of suspicious activities.

OBSERVE

Neighborhood members have the ability to recognize unusual events in their surroundings. It is a matter of practicing observation skills to make them stronger. In order to understand how to properly observe people, vehicles and incidents that may affect us, begin by learning what types of things to observe. You should pay attention to things like:

- Physical setting – Specific location, time of day, day of week.
- People – What do they look like? (height, weight, ethnicity, gender, etc.) How many are there?
- Specific items – Clothing, hats, what is being carried?
- Routines – Did you notice any recurring patterns or routines? How often did they occur? Who was involved
- Transportation - The make and model of the vehicle, e.g., Ford Expedition and license plate (write it on paper, on your hand, or even in the dirt).

REPORT SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY

(Anything that feels uncomfortable or looks out of place)

Some common examples of suspicious activities include:

- A stranger loitering in your neighborhood or a vehicle cruising the streets repeatedly.
- Someone peering into cars or windows.
- A high volume of traffic going to and coming from a home on a daily basis.
 - Someone loitering around schools, parks, or secluded areas.
 - Strange odors coming from a house, building, or vehicle.
 - Open or broken doors and windows at a closed business or unoccupied residence.
 - Someone tampering with electrical, gas, or sewer systems without an identifiable company vehicle or uniform.
- Persons arriving or leaving from homes or businesses at unusual hours.
- Multiple persons who appear to be working in unison and exhibiting suspicious behaviors.
- Signs of forced entry or tampering with security or safety systems.

WHEN TO CALL 9-1-1

Calling 911 is an important communications tool for emergencies. However, some citizens call 911 in non-emergency situations. This can cause the dispatch operator to miss a call of a person needing help. It is important that not only your groups but all citizens understand when to call and when not to call 911.

When To Call

- Medical emergency (examples: chest pain, extreme shortness of breath, uncontrolled bleeding).
- Motor vehicle accident.
- Fire.
- When a life is in danger.

When Not to Call

- The power is off.
- Asking for directions to the hospital.
- Asking for telephone numbers of others.
- Requesting to speak with a particular officer.
- Inquiring as to the time and day.
- Inquiring about community activities and locations.

If you do call, remember:

- Tell the call taker what happened and the exact location.
- Provide a detailed description of individuals or vehicles.
- Remain on the phone and stay calm.
- Be prepared to answer follow-up questions.

2. BASIC EMERGENCY SUPPLY KIT RECOMMENDED ITEMS

- Water, one gallon of water per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation.
- Dust mask, to help filter contaminated air, and plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place.
- Battery-powered or hand crank radio and a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio with tone alert and extra batteries.
- Food, at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food.
- Flashlight and extra batteries.
- First aid kit.
- Whistle to signal for help.
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags, and plastic ties for personal sanitation.
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities.
- Can opener for food (if kit contains canned food).
- Local maps.
- Prescription medications and glasses.
- Infant formula and diapers.
- Pet food and extra water for your pet.
- Important family documents such as copies of insurance policies, identification, and bank account records in a waterproof, portable container.
- Cash or traveler's checks and change.
- Emergency reference material such as a first aid book or information from www.ready.gov.
- Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each person; consider additional bedding winter.

- Complete change of clothing including a long sleeved shirt, long pants, and sturdy shoes. Consider additional clothing in winter.
- Household chlorine bleach and medicine dropper. When diluted nine parts water to one part bleach, bleach can be used as a disinfectant. Or in an emergency, you can use it to treat water by using 16 drops of regular household liquid bleach per gallon of water. Do not use scented, color safe, or bleaches with added cleaners.
- Fire extinguisher.
- Matches in a waterproof container.
- Feminine supplies and personal hygiene items.
- Mess kits, paper cups, plates and plastic utensils, and paper towels.
- Paper and pencil.

3. BASIC HOME TARGET HARDENING TECHNIQUES

ASSESSING THE STRUCTURE

When scanning a home, you begin your home burglary risk assessment with the front door and work your way around the house. Start at the entryway of the house or apartment and observe the door, the locks, nearby windows, entry area lighting, and the general appearance of the home, as well as other features such as whether an alarm system is present. Next, move counterclockwise around to the side and back where you have a garage that needs to be secured.

DOORS

As the primary point of entry for many burglars, the first item to inspect is the front door. Hollow-core or poorly fitting doors can mean trouble, as can front doors that are not equipped with proper deadbolt locks (at least one inch). All exterior doors should be metal or solid wood 30 and have strong door hinges on the inside of the door with hidden or non-removable pins. Recommend homeowners install good quality deadbolt locks on all exterior doors and on any doors that open to attached garages.

LOCKS

Recommend homeowners install strong, reliable deadbolt locks extending at least one inch when in the locked position. They may also want to consider deadbolts with reinforced strike plates and extra long mounting screws to anchor the lock. Finally, if there is a change in home ownership, recommend all locks be changed immediately to avoid the possibility that extra keys to the house may be in the hands of unknown individuals. High quality security locks are available at most major market retailers and hardware stores.

WINDOWS

After doors, windows are the next most-utilized access points, yet they are often overlooked by both law enforcers and citizens alike. Windows can be broken, pried open or lifted from their tracks, or can have their panes removed by thieves. It is important for your windows to have locks on them. Though placing nails or pins in a double hung window can be a fire hazard it can provide extra security when away. You might want to have a professional window expert come out and talk to you about the security of your windows or what you can do to make them more secure.

LIGHTING

Although lighting is often considered decorative, a well-lit house can expose individuals attempting to conceal themselves and commit criminal acts. A lighting audit should be completed after dark to be certain you are evaluating artificial illumination and not daylight. It is okay if the night is bright due to moonlight. In areas less lighted at night you might consider motion detector lighting or sensor lights.

ALARMS

The mere presence of some alarm systems may deter potential burglars. Alarm company signs placed in the yard, stickers on the windows, and visible contacts or keypads are often enough to cause the average burglar to think twice before trying to break in. Since burglary is a crime of opportunity, the potential thief may decide to move on to a location that does not have an alarm system. There are many types of alarm systems on the market including monitored, non-monitored, audible, wireless, sound-based, motion-based, etc. The purchase of an alarm system and its accompanying service or monitoring fees can be a major financial commitment, and is one that should be thoroughly researched by the homeowner.

GARAGES

When it comes to security, the garage is one area of the home that is commonly overlooked. Many garages have electronic garage door openers that give the homeowner a false feeling of security. Another often ignored element of the garage is the door that connects the garage to the house. If this door is not kept secure, then anyone entering the garage can enter the house. In order to increase garage security and house security, residents should always lock the doors connecting a home to an attached garage. They should not rely on an automatic garage door opener for security. At home, people should always park their cars in the garage with the garage door shut. If a burglar notices a pattern where the garage door is left open, or cars are normally parked in the driveway whenever someone is home, then a closed garage door or no cars in the driveway may be a giveaway that no one is home. Consistency in leaving the cars in the garage behind closed doors will keep from tipping off the burglar that the home is unoccupied. Besides, leaving the garage door open allows strangers to see whatever belongings are stored in the garage. It's a good idea for homeowners to install automatic openers that will allow them to stay in their cars until safely parked in the garage.

For those without garages it is important that valuables are not left easily seen in the car and that the car is locked while in the driveway.

EXTERIOR APPEARANCES

Make sure your trees and bushes are trimmed and don't provide secluded shelter for a robber is important; use fences, walkways, and shrubs to direct visitor access; limit entry or call attention to individuals who have deviated from the designated pathway; planting thorny bushes around windows to make illegal entry more difficult; trimming shrubs and trees that could conceal criminals; cutting back tree limbs that might allow thieves to climb into windows; and using landscaping designs that provide maximum visibility to and from the house.

4. BURGLARY/THEFT

Operation ID is a program where property is marked or engraved with a special number. This is called an owner-applied number (OAN) and it can be used to report stolen items. Operation ID has shown dramatic results in reducing burglaries and theft. Burglars usually avoid marked items because they are hard to re-sell.

- Mark valuables with driver's license number (DL) or state identification number (ID).
- To make sure nobody changes the OAN, put the two letters of your state at the start and end it with DL, or ID.
- Never use your social security number. Don't engrave paintings, antiques, or any item you may want to sell.
- Hang Operation ID decals near your doors. This lets burglars know that property inside has been marked and won't be easy to re-sell. Decals and stickers are available from police agencies or you can purchase them from the National Sheriffs' Association.

Engravers are inexpensive tools that can save you thousands of dollars.

PROPERTY LIST

It's a good idea for community members to make a list of their property, including CDs, DVDs, videos, and any other collectible items. The list should be kept in a safe place. A list saved on the computer is no good if the burglars steal the computer too! People should take photos of expensive items, such as jewelry, and fill in a "Property Inventory Form" (available through Neighborhood Watch) to help police return any recovered property. Finally, it is imperative to remember that maintaining current and adequate insurance coverage is very important.³²

Personal Property

Identification Record

If you are a victim of a burglary it is important to know the serial numbers of the items stolen. Without positive identification made possible by a serial number – or a unique number which you may engrave on your property – you may not be able to prove you are the rightful owner if the item is recovered. In addition, having a good record of your valuables makes it easier to report missing items to insurance companies for replacement.

Take a few minutes and record the description, serial numbers, and value of those items which are most likely to be stolen. Many are listed on this form. You should also take pictures especially of jewelry, silver, and antiques. Keep your property record and pictures safe along with insurance papers.

Credit and Charge Cards

Company

Card Number

Company

Card Number