



## Everett Police Department Residential Burglary Prevention Circular

### Introduction

If you were locked out of your house, would you still be able to get in? Maybe you keep an unlocked window in the back of your house or a hidden key in your mailbox or on top of a window ledge? You may think this is a good idea, but guess what? If you can break in, so can a burglar! According to the National Crime Prevention Council, one out of ten homes will be burglarized this year. For a small amount of time and money you can make your home more secure and reduce the chances of being a victim.

### Locks

Did you know in almost half of all residential burglaries, thieves simply enter through unlocked doors or crawl through unlocked windows?

- Make sure every external door has a sturdy, properly installed dead bolt lock with a one and one half inch throw. Key-in-the-knob locks alone are not enough.
- Instead of hiding keys around the outside of your home, give an extra key to a neighbor you trust.
- When you move into a new house or apartment, re-key the locks.

### Padlocks

Padlocks are vulnerable to attacks at several points. The shackle can be pried out of the lock by a crowbar or jimmy, or it can be sawed off or cut with bolt cutters. The casing can be crushed or distorted by hammering. In quality padlocks, modifications have been incorporated to reduce their vulnerability to these attacks.

For instance, hardened steel cases and shackles are used to defeat cutting and crushing. Rotating inserts and hardened materials are used to prevent the sawing of shackles. Heel and toe locking is used to prevent prying. A key-retaining feature is used to prevent the removal of the key until the padlock is locked. Thus, a padlock cannot be removed and returned after an unauthorized person has made a key. To make picking of a padlock more difficult, quality locks have five to six pin tumblers. Something else to keep in mind, a padlock is no better than the hasp it engages. For a hasp to offer reasonable security, it must be made of hardened metal. A hasp must also be properly mounted on solid material so it cannot be

pried off. In the locked position, no mounting screw or bolt should be accessible. Padlocks and hasps should always be considered a single unit. There is no point in mounting a quality padlock to an inferior hasp. The hasp and lock should always be of the same quality. Where the hasp and the lock are not of the same quality, the complete device is only as good as its weakest member.

## **Doors**

A lock on a flimsy door is about as effective as locking your car door while leaving the window down. It is useless to spend good money on inferior locks. A novice burglar using simple tools can quickly open them. A properly constructed lock will be a pin tumbler lock and have at least five pins within its mechanism. Every exterior door should have a dead bolt lock for additional security. All dead bolt locks should have:

1. A bolt which extends at least one and a half inches when in a locked position.
  2. A cylinder guard ring of hardened steel.
  3. A hardened steel insert or bearing in the bolt. This prevents sawing of the extended bolt.
- Wooden doors are of two types; solid throughout or having a hollow center. All exterior doors should be of solid wood construction or metal for greater security.
  - Outside hinge pins can make a good lock useless; an intruder could enter by removing these pins. To prevent this, follow these simple rules:
    1. Each hinge has two sides or leaves. One leaf is screwed to the door and the other to the doorframe. Remove one screw from the doorframe leaf. Make certain they are directly opposite each other.
    2. Insert a solid metal pin, screw, or concrete nail into the hole formerly occupied by the screw on the doorframe leaf. After installation, the pin, screw or concrete nail should protrude from the hinge about ½ inch.
    3. Drill out the opposing screw hole in the door to fit the pin, screw or concrete nail. Do this to each hinge on your door. When the door is closed and locked, the hinge pins still remain removable, but the door itself cannot be lifted out.
  - The metal plate attached to your doorframe or jamb for the purpose of receiving the latch or bolt is called a strike; make sure that strikes on all exterior doors are solidly in place.

- If your door has a mail slot, an interior hood will prevent any one from looking through into your house but will not interfere with mail deposits.
  - If your doors don't fit tightly in their frames, install weather stripping around them.
  - Know who is calling before opening your door. Install a peephole or wide-angle viewer in all entry doors so you can see who is outside without opening the door. Door chains break easily and don't keep out intruders.
  - Sliding glass doors can offer easy access if they are not properly secured. However, a sliding glass door can be secured so it cannot be opened or lifted out of its track even when the lock has been removed or broken.
1. Drill at least a one quarter inch diameter hole that angles downward through the top channel and continues into the top portion of the sliding doorframe when closed. By placing a solid metal pin or a bolt into the hole, the door will be held securely in place. When not in use, the pin can be attached to a cord or light chain and dropped through a screw eye adjoining the door.
  2. For additional security, screw two or three number 8 or number 10 sheet metal screws into the track above the sliding door. The screws should protrude so the top of the closing door just clears them. This will prevent the door from being lifted out of the lower track.
  3. A length of broomstick, wood dowel or metal rod, when placed in the lower track will prevent a sliding door from opening. Make certain it fits snugly into the track when the door is closed.
  4. Inexpensive pin type locks may be purchased and easily installed to prevent the operation of sliding glass doors.

## **Windows**

Sliding glass windows can offer easy access if they are not properly secured. Like sliding glass doors, you can secure them by installing commercially available locks or by placing a broomstick or dowel in the inside track to jam the window. To prevent the window from being lifted off the track, drill a hole through the sliding window frame and the fixed frame. Then insert a pin in the hole. Casement windows are the easiest to secure. Make certain the locking latch works properly and the crank that opens and closes the window has not excessive play. Replace any worn hardware.

Double-hung sash windows are usually found in older homes and apartments. To secure these windows, drill a hole that angles slightly downward through a top corner or the bottom window. Then place a solid pin or nail into the hole to prevent

the window from being opened. Keyed latches may also be purchased to lock double-hung sash windows.

Louvered windows are difficult to burglar proof because the individual panes of glass are easily removed. The application of a two-part epoxy resin to each pane of glass will prevent easy removal. Another effective way to secure louvered windows is to install a grille, grate, or security bar on the windows. However, be sure the grilles, grates, and security bars are designed to easily and simply open from the inside, otherwise they could prevent escape in the event of fire. **Warning! Do not install grilles, grates or any type of security bars on windows before checking with the Everett Fire Department.**

- Don't forget to secure any windows location in the garage area of your home. Also consider covering garage windows with curtains so that prowlers cannot easily look in (and see what you property you own).
- Break-resistant plastic or treated glass in windows gives added security.
- Make sure window air conditioners are firmly secured to the windows.

Place gravel beds below windows; gravel can be noisy and tough to sneak across without being heard. Plant thorny bushes around windows and walkways. Shrubs and bushes are favorite hiding spots for burglars. Spiny or thorny bushes will discourage entry.

### Miscellaneous openings

Don't overlook ventilation openings or crawl spaces that permit access under your home, or small swinging doors used by your pets. Grilles, grates or heavy screening will deter entry through these miscellaneous openings.

### **Exterior of the house**

Look at your house from the outside. Make sure you know the following tips:

- Burglars prefer darkness and they generally stay away from well-lit areas. The front, rear and side of your home should be well-lit and the lights should always be kept on at night. You should locate outside floodlights just below the edge or eaves of the roof. Wire coverings can be effective for protecting against intentional bulb breakage, Installing a timer or photoelectric cell will automatically turn lights on at dusk and off at dawn. Installing motion sensor floodlights will ensure floodlights turn on when a person or object moves past them. Installation of low-voltage lighting uses very little energy and is an excellent way to illuminate lawns, steps, walkways and shrubs.

- Prune any large tree limbs near your home. Tree limbs too close to your home can provide easy access to a second story window. Keep shrubbery trimmed so it never blocks the view to or from any door or window. Trimmed shrubbery will give you, your neighbors and the police on patrol a better view of trespassers and will deny an intruder a place to hide. A well maintained lawn and landscaping gives your house a “lived in” look.
- Clearly display your house number so police and other emergency personnel can find your home quickly.
- Consider creating the illusion that you’re home by getting some timers that will turn light on and off in different areas of your house throughout the evening. Lights that are on 24 hours a day can signal to thieves that the house is vacant.
- Leave shades, blinds, and curtains in normal positions.
- Don’t let mail pile up in your mailbox. Call the post office to stop delivery or have a neighbor pick the mail up.
- If you plan to be gone for several days, consider having a neighbor park their car in your driveway at varied times.

## **Garages**

Your garage should be kept closed and locked at all times. By leaving your garage open, burglars have access to your tools, which can then be used to break into your home. It is recommended that you secure both sides of your garage door with hardened steel hasps and quality padlocks. Install a dead bolt lock on any doors that lead from the house into the garage.

## **Gates and fences**

Solidly built gates and properly built fences is the first line of defense against illegal or unwanted entry. Equip all gates with good locks and use them. Make sure they don’t hide your window, doors and walkways from public view, or serve as a step up to a window or balcony. Also, consider installing non-opaque fencing material so that you can easily see if someone is hiding on the other side of the fence.

## **Storage Lockers**

Many apartment homes provide storage lockers for tenants. They are generally located in carports or areas accessible to burglars. If the storage locker has exposed hinges, install one-way (non-removable) screws or install interior hinges.

Check storage locker doors and hasps for proper closure. A loose hasp can allow burglars to easily reach in and take whatever they want.

### **Operation Identification**

Property recovered by the police cannot be returned unless the rightful owner can be identified. Participate in the Operation Identification program by taking photographs of your valuable property and by recording and maintaining an up-to-date record of their serial numbers and descriptions. Place the photograph and valuable property record in a safe place. Also, keep a detailed and accurate description of all valuables that do not have serial numbers. Additionally, remember to mark your valuables with your driver's license or State identification number (do not use your social security number). Marking your property with these numbers increases the likelihood of your valuables being traced by police and returned to you, if recovered. Report stolen or lost items to the police as soon as possible.

### **Alarms**

Alarms can be a good investment, especially if you have many valuables in your home, or live in an isolated area or live in one with a history of burglaries.

- Check with at least three alarm companies (five is better) before you purchase so you can decide what level of security fits your needs. Do business with established companies and check references before signing a contract.
- Make sure the alarm company you select is a member of the Washington State Burglar and Fire Alarm Association.
- Try to contact three current customers of the alarm company you plan to select to get their opinion on the company.
- Learn how to use your system properly! Don't "cry wolf" by setting off false alarms. People will stop paying attention and you can also be fined.
  1. Sound-detecting socket that plugs into a light fixture and makes the light flash when it detects certain noises.
  2. Motion sensing outdoor lights that turn on when someone approaches.
  3. Lights with photoelectric cells that turn on during the day and off at night.

### Questions to Ask an Alarm Company Representative

1. Is the firm established with a history of performance and service?

2. Does the alarm company have insurance to cover the cost of any damage to your property caused by the company during installation?
3. Is the company and their installers properly licensed and bonded? Is there anything sub-contacted (installation, service, monitoring).
4. Is the central monitoring station U/L approved? Where is it located?
5. Is the system equipped with a battery backup? Is the battery rechargeable?
6. Does the company offer a written guarantee? What is guaranteed and for how long? Are parts and labor covered?

### **Burglars do more than steal**

Burglars can commit rapes, robberies, and assaults if they are surprised by someone coming home or pick homes that are occupied.

- If something looks questionable, i.e., a slit screen, a broken window or an open door -don't go in. Leave the location immediately and call the police from a neighbor's house or a public telephone.
- At night, if you think you hear someone breaking in, leave safely if you can, then call the police. If an intruder is in your room, pretend you are asleep.
- Guns are responsible for many accidental deaths in the home every year. Think carefully before buying a gun. If you do own one, learn how to properly store it and use it safely.

### **Take a stand against Residential Burglary**

- Join a neighborhood watch group! If one doesn't exist, you can start one with the help of the Everett Police Department. Neighborhood Watch is a crime prevention program that enlists the active participation of residents in cooperation with law enforcement to reduce crime in their communities. Neighborhood Watch involves:
  1. Neighbors getting to know each other and working together in a program of mutual assistance.
  2. Neighbors being trained to recognize and report suspicious activities in their neighborhood.
  3. Neighbors implementing crime prevention techniques and strategies within their neighborhood.
- Never leave a message on your answering machine that indicates you may be away from home. Rather than saying, "I'm not at home right now", say, "I'm not available right now."

- Consider placing expensive jewelry and priceless family heirlooms in a safe-deposit box. Never hide these items in your home.
- Purchase a quality safe and have it mounted to the floor. Use the safe to secure valuables you cannot secure in your safe-deposit box (i.e. guns and furs). If a safe is not within your budget, set aside a closet in your home and install a solid core or metal door with non-removable hinge pins and a dead bolt lock for additional security. Use this closet to secure your larger valuables.
- Work with neighbors and local government to organize a community cleanup. The cleaner your neighborhood, the less attractive it is to crime.

### **Vacation Tips**

Whenever you are on vacation and your home will be unoccupied for an extended period of time, make certain your home looks “lived-in” while you are away. Discontinue all deliveries before you leave. Leave a key with a trusted friend or neighbor and ask them to change the position of your blinds and drapes daily. Place interior and exterior lights on a timer so lights go on at dusk and turn off at dawn. Arrange with a friend or neighbor to regularly pick up mail, advertising circulars, newspapers and debris during your absence. Burglars want to get in and out of a home without being noticed in a minimum amount of time. They will usually avoid a home that looks occupied or is difficult to enter.

### **Summary**

Even with the precautions already mentioned, a burglar may still get into your home. Remember that no home can be made 100 percent burglar-proof, but in most instances, by making it extremely difficult for the burglar to enter your home, burglars will most likely move on to a home where “entry” is less difficult

### **Conclusion**

The residential burglary prevention information included in this circular was compiled from materials obtained from the following:

Everett Police Department  
National Crime Prevention Council  
National Sheriff’s Association