

# Simple and Inexpensive Ways to Protect Your Home from Burglars



Presented to you by Alamo Alarm Company, a local, honest, family owned and operated full service security business since 1980.



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108 E. Walnut Street ~ Lodi, Ca 95240 • (209) 369-7749 / (209) 463-9971 • [www.alamoalarm.com](http://www.alamoalarm.com)

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# Sending the Message



Dear Neighbor,

I have heard it said many times, “If someone wants to get in to your house, they will find a way.” As a retired police burglary investigator, I believe that to be an actual truism. But I also believe there are things we can do to reduce the likelihood of becoming a victim. Therefore, it becomes necessary to send a solid message to a would-be thief that your home is protected. Alamo Alarm Company is providing the following suggestions and information to offer simple steps that we should all take to help protect our home from burglary. Although no one can guarantee that your home will not be burglarized, any layer of protection that we add can make a difference. In my professional opinion, the following suggestions should be considered for use by everyone, but in no way, can they replace the need for a Monitored Home Security Alarm System.

It is a well know fact that indicators of increased security (alarm signs, alarms, outdoor cameras or other surveillance equipment) are considered the number one burglary deterrent after the presence of people and/or police. In the United States, homes without a security system are three times more likely to be burglarized. That's because burglars want to get in and out with your valuables with as little hassle as possible—why risk getting caught by a security system when they could just move onto the next house without one? Over the past several years, many universities, including the University of North Carolina at Charlotte Department of Criminal & Criminology and Rutgers University School of Criminal Justice (SCJ) in Newark, N.J., have studied the effectiveness of home security systems. Research found that residential burglar alarm systems decrease crime. Typically, burglars spend less than 60 seconds breaking into a home. The more difficult it is to gain access, the more likely a burglar is to reconsider the attack. Most convicted burglars said they want to avoid homes with alarm systems and said if they did encounter an alarm, they would simply seek an alternative target.

Another thing to consider in “sending the message” is the fact that monitored alarm systems provide a huge benefit to the community. When multiple homes in a neighborhood are protected with alarm systems, it represents unity in that community. This acts very much like that of a neighborhood watch. Burglars are sent a clear message to move on to the next neighborhood, not just the next house.

Ultimately, I recommend that we should all take an active roll in our homes protection. Whether we are having a system installed or simply taking precautionary steps, whether your home is in a neighborhood that has a significant history of crime or is situated in a relatively tranquil location, we are all seeking the same peace of mind in knowing our home is as safe as it can be while we are there or away. I encourage you to research your area and stay alert to trends and most of all, communicate with those in your neighborhood and community. When neighbors know each other, strangers stick out.

Stay safe,

Jeremy J. Larson  
Security Consultant / Retired Law Enforcement

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# Is Your Home on Display?



- Don't leave things lying around your yard or in plain sight from the road or side walk. This can send a message that you are lax on security and possibly lure thieves onto your property. If you have a bike or scooter that someone could easily walk away with, roll it into your garage. Keep your garage door shut.
- After purchasing new electronics or other pricey items, don't leave the boxes beside the trash can or recycling bin. The only people who should know what is in your house are those whom you invite inside. New purchases might send the message that you have other valuables inside. Break down those boxes and take them to the recycler.
- Take time to see what others see as they walk or drive by your home. Open up your curtains, blinds or shades and stroll around the house and see what's visible. If you have expensive items within plain sight or near windows, think about moving them to another area as well as keeping window coverings closed. Keep this in mind during the winter holidays as well – wrapped presents are a huge temptation for thieves.

# Is There Anybody Home?



- If burglars think that someone is home, there's a good chance that they won't attempt to break in. Most burglaries occur during the day when many people are at work.
- Make it look like someone's still there.
  - You can leave a light on, along with music or your television.
  - Keep a car parked in the driveway and move it once in a while.
  - Keep your front door clear of ads, newspapers and mail. (Burglars have been known to tag doors with ads and flyers to see if anyone is home to remove them)
  - Keep your yard clean and mowed.
  - Set timers on lights and/ or a television.

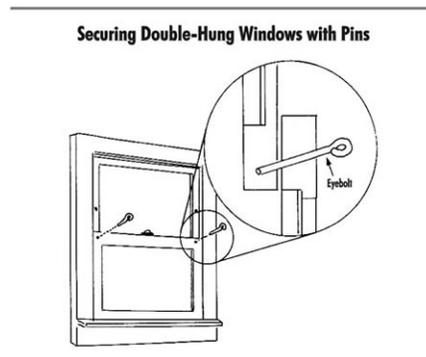


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# Secure Sliding Doors and Windows



- Some older sliding doors can be lifted off of their frame, even when they are locked. Even some newer doors can be jarred open.
  - Use a strong dowel or steel bar and slide it into the window track. The rod stops the door or window from sliding back and opening.
  - Use screws as spacers to prevent doors from being lifted.
- You should always lock your windows before leaving the house, but there are ways to add an extra layer of security to most windows and doors.
  - Install a simple pin or nail into to the frame to stop it from opening. You can also consider using manufactured locking pins.
  - Place a dowel into the closed window track.
  - Windows with air conditioners should be properly installed and need to have a stopper to keep the window from moving.



# Spare the Key



- It may seem like a good idea to leave a spare key hidden under a flower pot or doormat in case you get locked out of your house. But that's an open invitation for a burglar to walk inside without any difficulty. Someone could also see you retrieve the key at some point, giving away your hiding place. Burglars know to look for fake rocks and other hiding spots near entry points to the house.
  - Instead, give a spare key to a neighbor you know well or friend who lives nearby for safekeeping.
- Never put any identifying information on your house keys. A found key with an address is like an open invitation to a thief.
- Burglars have been known to make imprints of keys at garages and valet parking areas.
  - Your house keys and car keys should not be on the same ring.
  - When using valet parking or dropping your car off for service, use a key ring separator to keep your house keys with you. Burglars can easily get your address from your vehicle registration.

NOTE\* If your car is ever broken into or stolen, always change the code on your garage door opener. A stolen or duplicated garage door remote is an easy access key to your home.

# Keep it Trim



# Light It Up



- Be proud of your home from the outside in. A well manicured yard shows that you care. It can also take away areas of concealment, not to mention it just looks nice.
- Untrimmed bushes and untamed grass can be a signal to burglars, causing them to think that you may be out of town. Overgrown shrubs and trees make for a perfect hiding place. Try to make your doors and windows visible from the street.
- Make sure your house numbers are visible.
- Consider planting thorny shrubs or rose bushes around windows.
- If you're going to be out of town, have someone keep up on lawn maintenance.
- Burglars hate light. Have adequate lighting around your home.
  - Motion sensor lights work best because they attract attention and have a startling effect.
- Keep a pad lock on side gates. This will limit who goes into your back yard and make it difficult for burglars to gain access.



# & Lock the Gate

# Know Your Local Law Enforcement

- Police can help you stop crime before it happens, rather than just responding to it. For instance, if you're leaving town for a while, let the police know and request that they drive by your property to check on things. Most Police and Sheriffs have retiree volunteers, cadet programs and community service officers... Utilize them.
- Many police stations also offer free security evaluations for your property. If your local jurisdiction has a crime prevention officer, find out if he or she can survey your property and help you identify any security steps you can implement.
- Get to know the officers who patrol your neighborhood.
- Start or join a Neighborhood Watch... it works!
- Celebrate National Night Out. Getting to know your neighbors will show your local law enforcement that you and your neighbors are willing to do your part to lower crime.



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# Your Vacation Checklist



- Call your local police and let them know.
- Alert neighbors you trust about your trip and ask that they keep an eye on your property during that time.
- Don't leave signs of an empty house.
- Stop your mail and newspaper delivery while you are gone.
- Have a friend house sit.
- Ask someone to move your car periodically to make it look like you're still around.
- Arrange for someone you trust to cut your lawn.
- Arrange for someone to take your trash cans out to the curb.
- Don't post your vacation plans online. Also, don't post your vacation photos until you return home. (Try texting photos to your loved ones instead)
- Set timers on lights and/or electronics to have them come on when you are normally home.



# Arm It, Lock It, Leave It



- Lock your doors and windows and If you have an alarm, Arm it every time you leave.
  - Even if you are leaving only for a few minutes. Most burglaries take place in less than ten minutes. (It only takes a few seconds to arm your system and lock your doors.)

## Take Inventory

A household inventory can provide a record for insurance purposes and owner identification in case of theft. You should go room by room, taking photos or video.

- Take an inventory of your possessions, including the item, make, model, color, size, style, features, unique characteristics and serial number.
- All items should be photographed or videotaped, and the receipt filed with your log. Attach photographs and appraisals for all items unable to be engraved (especially jewelry).
- Make two copies of your inventory, keeping one copy in your home and another in a safe location outside of the home.

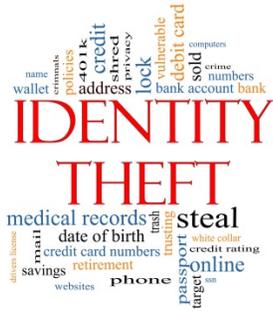


# When You're the Victim of a Burglary

Being a victim of any crime can give you a feeling of helplessness, but remember you can help police solve the burglary and possibly recover your property.

## When a burglary happens to you:

1. Contact the police as soon as you become aware of the burglary. **DO NOT GO INSIDE** Instead, go to another location or to a neighbor's home and wait for police to arrive. Once you do go inside, avoid touching anything. Give the officer who responds an accurate list of what items were stolen (especially firearms) or damaged, including serial numbers and identifying marks of the items. Having previously completed a *household inventory list*, along with photos will make this process easier and more accurate.  
Think of possible suspects such as recent workers in your home, visitors, disgruntled friends, or someone you suspect in the neighborhood and tell the officer why you suspect them.  
You will be provided with a case number. It will be necessary to have this number for insurance and for future police contact regarding your case.
2. Contact your insurance provider. Begin your claim process. Have your case number ready, as well as your list of damages and stolen items. Start a folder and keep copies of everything, including your police report, additional loss list, and related expenses for repairs.
3. Contact your bank, and your creditors. Place a 90 day fraud alert with credit reporting agencies. (refer to Identity Theft page)
4. Secure your home. If windows or doors were damaged, get them repaired or boarded up as soon as possible.



# Identity Theft Prevention

It is common for burglars to take identity related materials from your home in order to open fraudulent accounts in your name. To prevent becoming a victim of identity theft, take the following four steps as soon as possible after a burglary, and keep a record with the details of your conversations and copies of all correspondence.

1. Place a fraud alert on your credit reports, and review your credit reports. Fraud alerts can help prevent an identity thief from opening any more accounts in your name. Contact the toll-free fraud number of any of the three consumer reporting companies below to place a fraud alert on your credit report. You only need to contact one of the three companies to place an alert. The company you call is required to contact the other two, which will place an alert on their versions of your report, too.
  - ~ **Equifax: 1-800-525-6285**; [www.equifax.com](http://www.equifax.com); P.O. Box 740241, Atlanta, GA 30374-0241
  - ~ **Experian: 1-888-EXPERIAN** (397-3742); [www.experian.com](http://www.experian.com); P.O. Box 9532, Allen, TX 75013
  - ~ **TransUnion: 1-855-681-3196**; [www.transunion.com](http://www.transunion.com); Fraud Victim Assistance Division, P.O. Box 6790, Fullerton, CA 92834-6790
2. Close the accounts that you know, or believe, have been tampered with or opened fraudulently.
3. File a report with your local police or the police in the community where the identity theft took place.
4. File a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission. You can file a complaint with the FTC using the online complaint form; or call the FTC's Identity Theft Hotline, toll-free: 1-877-ID-THEFT (438-4338); TTY: 1-866-653-4261; or write Identity Theft Clearinghouse, Federal Trade Commission, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20580.