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*Bridgewater
Police
Department*

Bridgewater Township Police Home Security Program

Don't "Welcome" a burglar into your home.

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Most residential burglars devote little if any time to the advance planning of any specific break-in. Their crimes are, for the most part, crimes of opportunity. They pick what appears to be an easy mark. If their advance checking and closer examination reveal a greater risk than anticipated, they move onto a safer target. The more you can do to keep your home from looking like an easy target, the safer you are. There are also many steps that you can take to minimize your loss and improve your chances of recovery if a break-in does occur.

The first step in improving overall security is to take a hard look at the security measures already in use in your home. To help you with this task, the Bridgewater Police Department has developed a *Home Security Survey*. Conducting a security survey is important. Go through the survey carefully, look at your house at night as well as in the daytime. Remember, the survey points out security weaknesses around your home. Your home cannot be adequately protected until these weaknesses are corrected.

► Landscaping and Yard Security

A few alterations to your landscaping can be enough to put off intruders. To avoid getting caught, intruders look for property they can get into and out of quickly. Their ideal target is a house surrounded by large hedges and shrubs, which hamper visibility from the street and neighbors houses.

Bushes, Shrubs and Trees: Trim shrubbery and trees so doors and windows are visible to neighbors and from the street. Trimmed landscaping should not provide concealment for criminals. If you have a second floor, prune trees so they can't help a thief climb in second floor windows. Place trellises where they can't be used as ladders to gain entry to the upper floors.

- Ground plants (shrubbery and bushes) within four (4) feet of any sidewalks, driveways, doors or gates, should be maintained at a height of not more than two (2) feet.
- Ground plants between four (4) and eight (8) feet of any sidewalks, driveways, doors or gates, should be maintained at a height of not more than four (4) feet.
- Ground plants under windows should be maintained at a height that is below the window sill.
- Trees should be trimmed so that the lower branches are more than six (6) feet off the ground.

Place large gauge gravel on the ground near windows. The noise caused by intruders walking on it can become a psychological deterrent. **DO NOT** place river rocks or other items near glass windows or doors. You do not want to provide the burglar with his tools!

Plant spiny (thorny) plants along fences and under windows. Such plants will discourage even the most nimble intruder. Protecting the spiny plants is as effective as the use of barbed wire and a lot more attractive.

► House Numbers

House numbers should be easily visible from the street. Critical time can be saved by emergency responders when the street address for the house is visible from a distance.

On your house:

- Use numbers made of reflective materials or black on white, that are six (6) inches high.
- Keep numbers new and clean and replace when necessary.
- The numbers should be placed under a light and near the front door or garage entrance.

► Limited or Direct Access to Yards and Store Rooms

Intruders look for no or few obstacles blocking quick exits. Fences prevent burglars from carrying away large items if the gates are locked. Gates should be locked at all times, even when you're home!

Ladders and tools should be stored in a garage or storage shed and these areas should be locked.

Landscaping should also be designed to control access to your property. Proper barriers make the person with criminal intent feel uncomfortable as he or she approaches your home or business.

► Exterior and Interior Lighting

It is a known fact that good lighting is a deterrent to crime. While any lighting will help reduce your risk of becoming a victim, the proper lights used correctly will be the most effective deterrent to criminal activity.

Exterior lights are important, especially near doors and in the rear of the house where intruders do most of their work. All sides of your home should be protected by security lighting that is located high out of reach and is vandal resistant. Lighting in carports and garages is critical. For garages, an automatic garage opener and is vandal resistant. Lighting in carports and garages is critical. For garages, an automatic garage opener is the best choice. Almost every garage door opener made today has a light that comes on when the opener is activated, lighting the garage interior. In carports, it is best to leave a light on, have a light on a timer, or have a light connected to a motion sensor or photo electric cell.

The best light to use on the exterior is a motion detector type of fixture. The advantage to this type of light, especially in the backyard is that the light warns the resident that someone is in their yard. While there is a concern that dogs, cats or birds will trigger the sensor and cause the lights to come on, if the resident sets the sensitivity of the sensor correctly this will not be a problem. In the front yard, any type of lighting will be effective as long as the lighting pattern covers the entire front and sides of the house. Sensor lighting will be effective, but is more prone to "false alarms" caused by things like people walking down the sidewalk or children playing.

Interior when residents go out for an evening, they usually leave on their "burglar beacon". A burglar beacon is a small light that is left on so they don't walk into a dark house when they return home. These are lights like the one above the kitchen sink or stove, the hallway light or a light in the corner of the living room. Unfortunately these lights are a signal for the criminal that no one is home. If you go out for an evening leave a radio and several lights on. When you go on vacation put at least two lights, in different parts of the house and a radio on timers.

► House and Garage Doors

Entry doors should be solid core wood (at least 1 3/4" thick) or metal wrapped. Your door should fit its frame tightly, with no more than 1/8" clearance between the door and the frame. If the gap is too big, replace the door or bolt a sturdy metal strip to the door edge. You will boost your protection and save energy too.

Most hollow core doors can be easily broken through. If the door is flimsy or weak, or doesn't fit securely into the frame it offers little protection no matter what locks you use. Doors with decorative glass panels or windows are easy marks. It takes only seconds to break the glass and unlock the door. If you do not want to replace such doors, install a break-resistant plastic panel, such as Lexan®, or decorative grille over the glass. Attach the grill with special non-removable screws. For the best protection, install a wrought iron security door over your front door. Wrought iron doors not only provide an extra level of visible security against a break-in, they also allow you to open your front door to strangers or leave the front door open for ventilation.

Your garage door should be securely locked at all times (even when you are home). Keeping it locked is just as important as keeping your home locked, especially if the garage is attached to the home. Once inside the garage a burglar can work uninterrupted at getting into the house.

If you install a "doggie door" be sure it is not a way in for burglars as well as the dog. Do not be complacent by the fact that you have a small dog. Burglars come in all sizes!

► Locks, Strike Plates and Hinges

Locks/Deadbolts the "lock-in-knob" offers you privacy and convenience but it does not offer security from intruders. In fact many "lock-in-knob" locks can be opened by using a simple credit card. You may have privacy, but you don't have security. All exterior doors require the use of a deadbolt lock. When you turn the key the locking mechanism slides a strong metal bolt from the door into the door's frame.

When you buy a deadbolt lock, **MAKE SURE:**

- The bolt extends at least 1" (one inch) into the front edge of the door.
- The strike plate is attached through the trim to the door frame with screws at least 3" (three inches) long.
- It has a rotation case hardened shroud that prevents it from being twisted off with a pair of pliers or other tools.

The two most common types of deadbolts:

Single Cylinder Deadbolts – have a thumb turn on the interior side. They are convenient to use and may speed up the exit process in the event of fire. If used near a window they can be opened by breaking the window and reaching through. This type of deadbolt lock does not prevent the burglar from taking your property out through the door.

Double Cylinder Deadbolts – utilize keys on both sides. This type of lock should be considered if there is a glass window within 40" (forty inches) of the lock. However, this type of lock does present a potential fire escape hazard. This type of deadbolt lock can delay a burglar that wants to use the door to remove your property from your home.

Keys – As many as half of all burglaries take place without forced entry. Many times the burglar uses a key. Be sure your keys don't fall into the wrong hands.

- Never carry identification on your key ring or holder.
- Re-key all locks when you move into a new house or apartment.
- Know who has keys to your home. Do not give keys to maintenance or delivery people. If you must leave a key behind, leave it with a trusted neighbor. Make sure that each member of your family knows where his or her key is.
- Never hide a key outside. Burglars know all the hiding places.
- Do not hang keys on hooks within plain view inside your home.

Strike Plate – The strike plate is attached to the door frame with screws. The metal bolt of the deadbolt lock slides into the strike plate to secure the door soundly to the door frame. A high security strike plate is required to keep the metal bolt from being kicked from the door frame when locked. A high security strike plate should have at least 4 (four) screws that are a minimum of 3" (3 inches) long.

Hinges are often installed with the same 3/4" (three-quarter inch) screws as the common strike plate. Replace these with 2" (two inch) to 3" (three inch) fully threaded screws so the hinges are anchored to the sub-frame. In some cases the hinges are installed in such a manner that the hinge pins are exposed to the exterior and an intruder may attempt to remove the pins in an effort to gain entry.

Arcadia Doors and Sliding Glass Windows people often install sturdy locks on their front doors but leave arcadia (sliding glass) doors and sliding glass windows "wide open" to illegal entry. Burglars look for both of these because they are easy to open. Usually, arcadia doors and windows are more secluded than a front door, making a perfect place for burglars to hide and enter. Two factors must be protected against.

Prying the Lock – Most arcadia doors and sliding windows come equipped with a lock that is easily pried open. A supplemental lock must be installed.

- Broomsticks (they should fit snug), "Charlie bars" and finger operated locks provide some protection.
- Key locking devices are much preferred because they can prevent the burglars from using the door or window to remove stolen property.

Lifting Out – Many arcadia doors and sliding windows can be lifted out of their tracks from the outside. Two (2) sheet metal screws placed in the track above the removable part of the door or window can prevent it from being removed. Adjust the screws so that the doors or window will just clear underneath them. Drill a hole and insert a nail through the inside frame and part way through the metal door frame. You can remove the nail but the burglar can't.

Double Hung Windows – To secure a double hung window, drill a downward sloping hole into the top of the bottom window and through that into the bottom of the top window. A pin can now be inserted, locking the window shut.

► Security Alarms

Do you keep extremely valuable property (jewelry, television sets, computers, other electronic equipment, etc.) in your house? Do you often leave your house unattended for more than a few hours (go to work or school for example), or do you want more protection? These are reasons to invest in a quality alarm system. The F.B.I. has announced that over a ten year period, the average of 1 of every 4 residences throughout the nation will be burglarized. Based upon statistics like these, the Bridgewater Police Department recommends that most homes be protected by a good security system.

Many quality alarm systems are available. Before you purchase a security system, you should have in mind what kind of system you want. This will prevent buying more equipment than you actually need. Read as much about different brands and types of systems as you can. Talk to friends and neighbors that have alarm systems. We recommend that you speak to at least three security alarm companies about their product and service prior to purchasing any alarm system. Remember, you get what you pay for in many cases.

► Choosing Your System

Common questions asked by people considering an alarm system:

- How do I know the right company to choose when considering the purchase of an alarm system?
- How much protection do I need?
- How much should I expect to pay?

Tips to help when choosing an alarm company:

- Ask about insurance...general liability, workman's compensation and errors and omissions. You have every right to ask for certificates of insurance for these items. This protects you! Because if the company is not properly protected, the claim or losses falls on you!
- Ask for the company's city business license, which allows them to do business in your community.
- Ask for local referrals of other customers in your area that have had systems installed like the one being proposed to you.
- Check your contract! Review carefully what you sign, make sure everything is agreed upon in writing. Know what the warranty period is and what is included in the warranty.
- Remember, an adequate design should consider the structure, the lifestyle, the perceived needs and the budget of the occupant.
- Ask if the company has been established for 3-5 years.
- Ask if it is going to be monitored locally or outside of the State of New Jersey.
- Be sure the company does the entire installation on down, not subcontract work out.

► Other Home Security Information

Home Inventory List – keep a "Personal Property Inventory List" in a safe place, possibly with your insurance papers. This helps to recover stolen property in the event of a theft or burglary. Keep a duplicate copy in a safe deposit box or other safe place. The more complete your inventory list the better. In case of a loss by causes other than theft it may help you establish your loss with your insurance company. As an example, if you have a fire in your residence and lose a couch, an end table and a portion of your carpet in your front room, the accurate listing of when and how much you paid for the items will assist you in establishing your loss.

On the inventory list indicate the room the property was located in. Make the description of the item as complete as possible. Include the manufacturer model number, size, color and the material the item is made of. This list might include damage marks, repairs, etc. Make sure to list the manufacture's serial number on the list. Do not confuse the model with the serial number.

► Safety Tips at Home

- If you are bothered by obscene calls, hang up immediately and dial *57. This will record the location of the last call to your phone with the phone company. Then contact the phone company and make a harassing calls complaint.
- Always be observant of your surroundings.
- If you live alone don't use your marital status or first name on your telephone listing or on your mailbox.
- Get to know your neighbors.

- When returning home, or to your car, have your keys in your hand so that you can let yourself in without delay.
- If you think you're being followed, Don't go home! Go to an open business. If you are still being followed, call the police from there.
- Park your car in well lighted areas. Lock the doors and take the keys.
- If you think a prowler is threatening, take no direct action yourself, dial 9-1-1 immediately.

► Do's and Don'ts

Do's

- Use the security devices you have.
- Leave lights on inside and out when you go out for the evening.
- Have the police and fire department telephone numbers near your telephone.
- Carry only what is absolutely necessary in your purse.
- Check with the manager before letting repairmen in your house/apartment.
- Close your drapes in the evening hours.
- Be suspicious of people loitering around your house/apartment complex or the parking lot.
- Call the police if you see anything suspicious.

Don'ts

- Don't keep large sums of money in your home.
- Don't carry large sums of money while you are out.
- Don't let strangers in to "use your telephone".
- Don't undress in front of open windows.
- Don't leave notes on your door.
- Don't hide a key (leave one with a trusted neighbor).
- Don't display expensive equipment or items in plain view through your window.
- Don't use your name or telephone number on your answering machine message. Use a generic message that does not state that you are not home.
- Don't answer personal questions on telephone surveys.
- Don't admit "service reps" from utilities unless you have an appointment or can verify their authenticity.

Bridgewater Police Department

908-722-4111

Burglars enter a house, apartment or condominium every 15 seconds. Do not let your home become another statistic. Burglars look for what the police call "Targets of opportunity".

In order to protect yourself, make your home look occupied when you are not home. Chances are, thieves will not burglarize your home if they think you are there. Here are some specific measures you can take to help protect your personal belongings.

KEEP TRACK OF YOUR KEYS

Do not leave a key under a doormat, flowerpot or in or on items in your yard. A burglar will look there first.

KEEP GARAGE DOORS CLOSED AND LOCKED

Even when you are home, a locked garage door helps protect valuable property stored in your garage. Many times objects are spotted in the day when the garage door is open and stolen at night. Curtains or blinds on garage windows also help protect against seeing valuables inside whether or not you are home. A closed and locked garage door also prevents access to interior doors that lead to your house. If you are going to be gone for any length of time, consider disconnecting electric door openers or putting a pad lock on the garage door track.

PARK A CAR IN YOUR DRIVEWAY

If you have a second car, park it in the driveway. If you do not ask a neighbor to park there. This not only gives the appearance of an occupied house, but it can prevent burglars from backing up and loading your property into a vehicle. Have the vehicle moved periodically to appear as if the vehicle is being used.

DO NOT LET DELIVERIES ACCUMULATE

Have a neighbor pick up mail, newspapers, packages and circulars daily. If that is not possible, then have deliveries stopped so they do not pile up.

HAVE YOUR LAWN AND WALKS TAKEN CARE OF

Dry, uncut grass says you are away. Have snow shoveled from your walks, steps and drive.

HAVE A NEIGHBOR USE YOUR GARBAGE CANS

Empty garbage cans can be a sign that you are away.

CONSIDER BUYING A BURGLAR ALARM

These vary in sophistication from a simple door alarm that makes noise, scares thieves and alerts neighbors, to a silent alarm that is linked to an alarm company. An alarm may provide additional peace of mind. Check with security companies for a system that fits your needs.

CONSULT A GOOD LOCKSMITH

Different kinds of doors and windows require different kinds of locks. Single cylinder deadbolt locks are recommended, and an explanation of these locks are available from a locksmith. Be sure to have locks changed when you move into a new home.

KEEP SHRUBBERY TRIMMED

Thick, tall shrubbery provides hiding places for burglars and lets them work undetected.

LEAVE A RADIO OR TELEVISION ON

This says that someone is home. If you will gone for an extended period , you may want to connect a radio or even a television to a timer so it comes on at different times.

SECURE PATIO DOORS

A pin-type lock or a key lock works best, or a steel rod can be inserted in the door channel. Additionally, put two or three screws in the overhead track to reduce the chance of lifting the door out of the track,.

GET AUTOMATIC TIMERS

They help by turning lights on and off in different rooms at designated times.

LIGHT THE OUTSIDE OF YOUR HOUSE

It is important especially near doors and in the rear of your home where thieves do most of their work.

PUT PEEPHOLES IN DOORS

Install the type with a magnifying glass lens so you can see who is outside without opening the door. Also remember never to leave a note on your door telling people that you are not home.

MARK VALUABLE ITEMS WITH AN ENGRAVING PEN

Marking target items thieves are more prone to steal, such as stereos and TV's, will help police trace them and return them if they are recovered. Contact your local police department so they can tell you what numbers to use.

DEPEND ON THE POLICE

If you will be gone for an extended period of time, ask the police to check your home periodically. Also, talk to them about neighborhood watch programs. And be sure to call them immediately if you see unfamiliar or suspicious activity in you neighborhood.