

**LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT
RESIDENTIAL BURGLARY PREVENTION
CIRCULAR**

PURPOSE

The purpose of this circular is to standardize Residential Burglary Prevention information presented during community crime prevention meetings. The circular will also assist Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) personnel impart basic Residential Burglary Prevention tips to community members to help prevent and reduce residential burglaries in the City of Los Angeles.

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 that in almost half of all residential burglaries, thieves simply breezed in through unlocked doors or crawled through unlocked windows?

- Make sure every external door has a sturdy, properly installed dead bolt lock. 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 as a unit. There is no point in mounting a

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quality padlock on 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 by 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 either solid throughout or have 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 steps:
 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 anyone 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.

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- Sliding glass doors can offer easy access if they are not properly secured. However, a sliding glass door can be secured so that 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 eight or number ten 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, wooden 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 no 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 of 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 and basement 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 Los Angeles Fire Department.**

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- Don't forget to secure any windows located in the garage area of your home.
- Break-resistant plastic or treated glass in windows gives added security.
- Make sure window air conditioners are firmly secured to the window.

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 plants 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 hate bright lights. The front, rear and side of your house should be well lighted 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 large any tree limbs near your house. Tree limbs too close to your house could 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 police patrols 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.
- If you travel, create the illusion that you're at home by getting some timers that will turn lights on and off in different areas of your house throughout the evening. Lights burning 24-hours a day is a signal to thieves 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.

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GARAGES

Your garage should be kept closed and locked at all times. By leaving your garage open, burglars not only have access to valuables stored in your garage they have access to your tools. Burglars can use these tools 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 windows, doors and walkways from public view, or serve as a step up to a window or balcony.

STORAGE LOCKERS

Many apartment houses 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 photographs 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 California Driver License or Identification Card number, not your social security number. Marking your property with these numbers increases the likelihood of your valuables being traced by the 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 one with a history of burglaries.

- Check with local companies 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.
- 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.

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- Some less expensive options are as follows:
 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 during the night.

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 you can't leave, lock yourself in a room with a telephone and 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 Los Angeles 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.

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- 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 your 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 burglarproof, 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.

APPLICATION

Ask members of the audience to share their experiences and encourage them to identify additional areas in their homes where they can improve security and reduce residential burglary.

CONCLUSION

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

- Los Angeles Police Department, Crime Prevention Resource Center
- National Crime Prevention Council
- National Sheriffs’ Association
- Radio Shack