

HOME SECURITY TIPS

Residential burglaries in our area appear to be trending upward. Burglars generally have two overwhelming desires: they don't want to get caught and they are looking for small valuables—laptops, cell phones, cash, and jewelry—that are both easily portable and return the most money for their efforts. Following are a few suggestions that may help some homeowners and assume that you have made your home an unattractive target from the outside in the first place:

- If you don't have an alarm system, get one. Most alarm systems are set at the factory with a 60-90 second delay before the alarm sounds after an entry door is opened. Most burglars know this and know that they have at least a minute to quickly run through the house and grab valuables before the alarm system is activated with the alarm horn sounding and a call being made to the alarm monitoring company.
- Have your alarm technician set your delay to just 10-15 seconds. In most cases this is more than enough time for you to disarm your system if your alarm keypad is mounted just inside your entry door. The alarm horn sounding after such a short time should surprise the burglar and help convince him that it is time to get out.
- Pay an extra \$75 to have your alarm technician install a second, exterior alarm horn (under your eaves for example) to alert your neighbors and provide additional noise.
- Have a time delay (allowing you time to enter and turn the system off) on ONLY the door you use most often for entering the home- all other doors, windows and motion alarms will sound the alarm immediately when opened or activated.
- A couple of motion detectors in the home should serve to activate the alarm immediately if entry is made into the home through other than opening an alarmed door or window.
- A video "camera" pointed at the entry door area will appear that unwanted visitors are on candid camera, even though the camera may not be working. (Battery operated cameras with red flashing lights, for example, may be found for \$20 each.)
- Leave "valuables" in plain sight for the burglar to grab thereby convincing him that he's done well and can leave without spending additional time in the home to steal what may be hidden, and really valuable, and without ransacking and/or damaging the home.
- Leave an old worthless laptop, with the hard drive removed, and old inactive cell phone on the kitchen counter or other location where it will easily be seen only once a burglar is inside the home. (Obviously one should not leave these and other attractive items where they can be seen from outside the home to avoid providing an incentive to break in.)
- Consider paying for an inexpensive "diamond" ring made of cubic zirconium and a gold plated band and leave it in a small dish in plain view on the dresser in the master bedroom.
- If a burglar wants to kick in a door it is only a matter of how many kicks before the door gives way. Consider locking only the doorknob(s) when you are away from the house, leaving the deadbolt(s) unlocked, as increasingly burglars are kicking in front and other doors to gain entry. Locking only the door knob will likely mean just a single kick will be needed to gain entry but only a \$50 door knob is lost. The three to four kicks required to defeat a deadbolt will likely result in approximately \$2,000 in damage to the home, or considerably more if one has an expensive/custom door, as typically all locksets, the door and frame, interior and exterior trim and additional items will be destroyed and require replacing.
- Know your neighbors and their vehicles. Be alert for suspicious activity and call Oakland police (911 from home phone; 911 or 777-3211 from mobile phone for emergencies; 777-3333 for non-emergencies) if something is suspicious.

The following tips may also be helpful:

1. Post alarm signs, even if no alarm installed. Alarm systems are useful, but they do not prevent a break in, and may just help to limit the loss.
2. Post “beware of dog” signs. A dog is one of the best deterrents—crooks hate dogs. If no real dog, leave dog food and water bowls outside near an entry door and keep them clean and refreshed.
3. Trim away bushes that block view of front of house from street.
4. Have someone collect mail/newspapers when away rather than just “suspend” delivery.
5. Activate an automatic light/radio when away from house, even for a short time.
6. NEVER leave packages/valuables in your vehicle, even if it is locked and in the driveway.
7. Get to know your neighbors and let them know your schedule (when will the gardening service or repair person be there) so if they see suspicious activity they can call you.
8. Report suspicious vehicles and people that are not known in your neighborhood and individuals ringing doorbells without an apparent business vehicle (Call non-emergency: 777-3333).
9. The biggest factor for deterrence is a neighborhood watch. If everyone knows each other we can look out for each other.