

Seattle Police Email Community Newsletter

December 11, 2012



Dear Community Friends,

I receive many emails from you in the community about incidents of crime. Recently, I've seen a lot of email traffic regarding burglaries and concern about theft of delivered packages from residence porches. Today's newsletter is to discuss trends, burglary methods, and reinforce burglary and theft prevention measures. Some of this material will be familiar to some of you.

The Trends

[Burglars Are Concerned About Who Can See Them](#)

First, when burglars come in to an area and are looking for that home to break in to, they look to see if anyone notices them. So if you see someone in the neighborhood looking around at who may be looking at them, take note and watch what they do. Slowly walking down the street is not illegal; slowly walking down the street looking into people's home windows, their cars, and looking around at who may be watching is suspicious, and worthy of a 911 call.

[Burglars Select Homes That Appear Easy To Break Into](#)

How exposed is the home? How easily can I be seen by neighbors? Does it look like there are ways in without being seen?

[Burglars Tend To Select Homes That Appear Unoccupied...](#)

Is someone home? If they see that there are no cars parked out front, or if all the homes on the block have their curtains open except for one, or that all the trash cans are back from the curb on collection day except for one, these are indicators that that particular home may be unoccupied at that moment.

[... Then Check To Make Sure](#)

Burglars will often knock on the door or ring the bell to see if anyone is home. If someone does answer the door, the burglar gives some explanation why he/she is there ("Do you have a gas can?" "Oh, I thought this was Jimmy's place", "Have you seen my dog?"). Knowing that someone is home, more often than not, the burglars leave and search for another target. Conversely, if after knocking or ringing the bell, they get no answer, the burglars will look for a way in, often going to an area of the home not as visible to the neighbors. We have responded to many attempted burglary events where the homeowner was present but did not respond to the door when someone was knocking, only to find a moment later someone trying to break in, or seeing someone lurking outside the home. Once the would-be burglars realized someone was home, they fled.

[Common Methods Of Entry](#)

Methods of entry for the burglaries vary from kicking in the front or back door, breaking a window or sliding glass door, or often just lift open an unlocked window, using a recycle bin to boost themselves up to reach the window.

Things You Can Do

[Know Your Neighbors](#)

When you know who lives in your neighborhood, you have a better sense of when a stranger is on your block. The reason the neighbor (mentioned above) knew that young lady didn't live at that house is because the neighbors knew each other. It doesn't mean you have to be best friends with everyone on your block; but have a sense of who lives there, what cars they drive, what school age children live on the block, and so on.

[Take A Look Around](#)

When you are out and about in your neighborhood or elsewhere, take a moment to look and note what and who is around. As you walk out your door, or as you are coming back, take a moment to scan your surroundings.

[The Power Of Hello](#)

When you see your neighbors, wave and say “Hi.” Acknowledge each other. When you see people you don’t know on your block, wave and say “Hi.” Acknowledge them, too. Send the message that you are engaged in your neighborhood and that you are attentive to what is going on and who is around. People who want to break into homes don’t want to be noticed. If they are noticed, they can be identified.

[Answer The Door; Doesn’t Mean Open The Door](#)

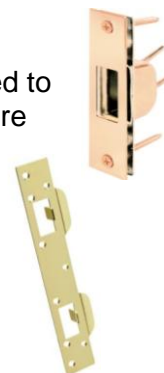
If you are home and someone comes to your door, answer the door. Let them know someone is home. That does not mean open the door. Talk to the person through the door. Let them know someone is home. Ask who is it and what they want. Do not disclose personal information and use “We” messages instead of “I” message (“We” can’t come to the door right now.” Leave the info on the porch and “we” will get it later. Now is not a good time for “us.”) Don’t worry about being rude; it is about your safety and the security of your family and home, not their feelings. Only open the door for those you know. Be able to identify who is on the other side of the door before you open it by looking through a peephole, a window or otherwise.

[Call 911](#)

If you see a person, vehicle or activity that is suspicious, do not hesitate to call 911. The more you know your neighbors, the more you know what is normal for your block, the better able you are to recognize those situations and activities that seem out of place. You are not wasting police officers’ time or tying up the 911 system by calling in suspicious activity; that is what the system is for. Please use it. It’s how officers know what and who to look for and what activity is happening. You don’t tell us, we don’t know; you don’t call us, we don’t show.

[Improve Your Home Security](#)

- Start by closing and locking all doors and windows when you are away from home, even for short periods of time.
- Prune back shrubbery to reduce any hiding spots that might make it possible for a burglar to try to gain entry through a door or window without being seen.
- Strengthen your Doors
 - Ensure you have dead bolt locks on all exterior doors. The throw bolt for your deadbolt lock should extend out at least one inch. Make sure that your deadbolt can fully extend into the strike plate area.
 - Install 3”-4” long screws in the strike plates on your door jamb. The longer screws make it more difficult to force open a properly locked door when the deadbolt is engaged. Make sure the longer screws go in to the wall stud that frames the door, not just in to the wall board. Installing the longer screws will require a drill to do a starter hole and then a screwdriver bit on the drill to sink the screw in completely. Take your time and be careful; you don’t want to rev the drill so fast that it strips the screw head (trust me – I speak from experience).
 - Consider installing a Strike Plate Box into the door jamb, one that not only secures to the jamb with longer screws (minimum 3”), but one that also has the option of having it secured to the framing by using a long screw at the back of the strike plate box. Strike Plate Boxes are not routinely available at big box retailers (such as Ace, Home Depot or Lowe’s). You may need to go to a building supply store or order them on line.
 - Consider installing a reinforced strike plate on the door and ensure that all screws securing it to the jamb penetrate through the jamb in to the wall stud (Again 3”-4” long screws). Here’s an example of one I have on my doors.
- Use dowels or Charlie bars for sliding glass windows or doors.
- Secure tools and ladders so they can’t be used to gain entry to your home or the home of a neighbor.



[Package Delivery](#)

- If you have ordered items and are going to have them delivered, consider having them delivered to your place of business rather than your home, or to a neighbor who has agreed to accept packages for you. Consider requiring signature confirmation; someone has to sign for the package so it is not just left unattended. Having unattended packages left on your porch become enticing targets for thieves; we know of criminals that have followed delivery trucks and stolen freshly left packages.

Thank you for all you do for your neighborhoods. We wish you a joyous Holiday Season.

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