

# Don't be a target.

Have you ever been locked out of your home?

Were you able to get in anyway?

Now think about it...if YOU could break into your own home, it's just as easy for someone else to break in, too. Many intruders will spend no more than 60 seconds trying to break into a home. The best prediction of a future burglary is a past burglary. Therefore, it is important to take preventative measures now. Strong locks — and good neighbors who look out for one another — can be effective deterrents to burglars. Here are a few tips that can help you keep you and your property safe and secure.

## Check Your Locks

- Make sure every external door has a strong, well-installed dead bolt lock. Key-in-the-knob locks alone are not enough. Lock your doors every time you leave the house, even if you're leaving for just a few minutes during the day.
  - Sliding glass doors offer easy access to burglars if they are not properly secured. You can secure them by putting a broomstick or dowel in the inside track to jam the door, or by installing commercially available locks. To pre-vent the door being lifted off the track, drill a hole through the sliding door frame and the fixed frame. Then insert a pin in the hole.
  - Lock double-hung windows with key locks or "pin" your windows by drilling a small hole at a 45 degree angle between the inner and outer frames, then insert a nail that can be removed.
  - Keep garage doors closed and locked
  - NEVER hide keys around the outside of your home!! Instead, give an extra key to a neighbor you trust.
- When you move into a new house or apartment, RE-KEY THE LOCKS.
  - Intrusion alarm systems ("burglar alarms") can provide valuable protection if installed correctly by a reliable vendor.



## Check Your Doors

While we all like to feel that once we close and lock our doors, we're safe and secure, the truth of the matter is that a lock on a flimsy door is about as effective as locking your car door but leaving the window down with your wallet on the front seat!

All outside doors should be metal or solid wood.

- Install a peephole or wide angle viewer in all entry doors so that you can see who is outside without opening the door. Door chains break easily and don't keep out intruders.
- If your doors don't fit tightly in their frames, install weather stripping around them.
- Replace weak strike plates with High Security Strike Plates. Fasten with long screws. This will also strengthen the frame system.

## Check the Outside

Take a look at your home from the out-side, and keep in mind the following tips to help make your home as safe as it can be:

- Burglars HATE bright lights. Install outside lights and KEEP THEM ON at night. Motion-detector lights can be particularly effective.
- Keep your yard clean. Prune shrubbery so it doesn't hide windows or doors. Cut back tree limbs that a burglar could use to climb to an upper-level window.
- If you travel, create the illusion that you are at home by getting timers that will turn lights (and perhaps a television or radio) on and off in different parts of your home throughout the day and evening hours. Lights burning 24 hours a day signal an empty house!
- Leave shades, blinds and curtains in normal positions. And make sure you don't let your mail and/or newspapers pile up! Call the post office and newspaper to stop delivery or have a neighbor pick them up.
- Make a list of your valuables, such as VCRs, stereos, computers, and jewelry. Take pictures of the items, list their serial numbers and description. This will help police if your home is burglarized.
- When getting work done on your vehicle, leave only the vehicle key for the service personnel.
- Contact the police department's crime prevention unit for a free home security survey.

## What About Alarm Systems

If you have valuables in your home, or if you live in an isolated area, consider an alarm system.

Before you invest in alarms:

- Check with several companies and decide what level of security fits your needs.
- Look for an established company and check references before using them.
- Learn how to use your system properly. If you continually set off false alarms, your neighbors will ignore the noise and you may be fined by the police department.

## Burglars Can Do More Than Just Steal

While most burglars prefer to strike when no one is home, intruders can commit other crimes such as rape, robbery, and assault if they are surprised by someone entering the home, or if they pick a home that is occupied.

- If something looks questionable — a slit screen, a broken window, or an open door — **DON'T GO IN!** Call the police from a neighbor's house, a cell phone, or a public phone.
- 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 phone and call the police.

One other important note — never leave a message on your answering machine that indicates that you may not be at home, or that you live alone. Instead, say, "We're not available right now."

## Look Beyond Locks & Alarms

No one individual or agency working alone can prevent crime. It takes police and citizens working in partnership.

- Join or help start a Neighborhood Watch group. If one doesn't exist, contact the St. Petersburg Police Department's Crime Prevention Unit to help start one.
- Look around for things that could contribute to crime - poor street lighting, abandoned cars, vacant lots, littered playgrounds with broken equipment, homes that elderly have trouble maintaining. Help organize a neighborhood clean-up/fix-up day.
- Keep written records of all jewelry and electronic equipment. If possible, keep these records in a safe deposit box, fireproof safe or other secure place. Take pictures and keep purchase information and serial numbers if available.

**Non - Emergency**  
**893-7780**  
**Emergency**  
**911**

St. Petersburg Police Department  
1301 First Avenue North  
St. Petersburg, FL 33705

For more crime prevention information, or to schedule a crime prevention presentation, call the St. Petersburg Police Department's Crime Prevention Unit at 727-893-4993.

This publication can be made available upon request in alternative formats, such as, Braille, large print, audiotope, or computer disk. Requests can be made by calling (727) 893-7345 (Voice) or 711 for the Florida Relay Service or email the ADA Coordinator at [lendel.bright@stpete.org](mailto:lendel.bright@stpete.org). Please allow 72 hours for your request to be processed.

## Burglary Prevention



**For Your Safety**

*Tips for protecting your home from burglary*



St. Petersburg Police Department  
[police.stpete.org](http://police.stpete.org)