

# Safeguard Your Home

by CHERYL HEIDE, Extension Specialist in Housing,  
and CHARLENE JACOBS, Extension Agent in Home Economics

JUL 3 1978

BLACKSBURG, VIRGINIA

Our homes should provide, among other things, a sense of safety and privacy. With the population growth and more crowded housing, this feeling is harder to come by these days. It becomes more important than ever to have living quarters which enhance our lives, while providing security for our families.

We hope that this publication will help bring a feeling of well-being and protection to you and your family. If all or just some of the suggestions offered here are followed, the chances of your home being burglarized will be greatly reduced.

## outsmarting a burglar

### "Walk in his shoes"

One of the most important lessons to be learned in safeguarding your home against burglars is to put yourself in the shoes of the criminal before you attempt to understand him, catch him, or defend yourself against him.

A burglar doesn't begin inside your house. First, he has to find an easy point of entry or approach to your property. Begin examining the safety of your house by taking a walk around your block and then around your house, looking at the security of your property.

## indoor and outdoor lighting

### A welcome and a safeguard

Reasonable lighting of your home is considered an effective method of crime prevention, as well as a necessary safety precaution. Lighting is low in cost, easy to test and maintain, and serves as a crime deterrent both by suggesting that people are home and by revealing the presence of intruders.

It's a good idea to leave some lights on in the front of your home at night—at the front door and also on the front porch or another nearby location (in case the first light burns out). If other households follow your example, the neighborhood will become a warmly-lit walkway that discourages would-be burglars.

For those times when all is quiet for the night, light switches installed near the bedroom, controlling both interior and exterior lights, can bathe the whole house in light, discourage would-be intruders and calm jumpy nerves. Central lighting controls can cost several hundred dollars, but once installed, they can be linked to the general security system so that lights will go on automatically in an emergency.

The entire exterior of the house and yard should be illuminated. With the new developments in outdoor lighting, it should take approximately four lamps to illuminate your entire property and garage entrance. New outdoor lamps are also highly resistant to vandalism and accidental breakage.

### Light up "hidden" areas

Remember that very few people live in box-shaped houses. There will probably be sections of your property that will remain dark and in shadows. Find these hidden areas by drawing an outline of your home in the center of a piece of paper, stick a pin where a light would likely be placed, and run straight lines from that pin past the outline of your house. When you find shaded areas that might escape beams of light, try moving the location of the light or adding an additional one. Then go on to another light source and repeat the process. Pay particular attention to extensions or protrusions along outside walls. Direct all security lights out from the house, not towards it to show it off.

### Buy a good flashlight

If you do not wish to run new wires and lighting outside your house, purchase a powerful flashlight so that you can examine the hidden areas of your property when suspicion is aroused. Take the light outdoors and scan your property, getting familiar with what it looks like at night so that you can detect unusual situations more easily. From inside, place the flashlight right up against the windowpane and shield it with your hand to prevent blurring from reflections.

If your house is lighted by a street lamp, this is a good deterrent, but it may not always be working. Have other resource lighting available.



## landscaping and property barriers

### Trees, shrubs, vines

The natural vegetation on your property is also important to the safety of you and your family. Trees and shrubbery around homes are lovely, and they have many other positive benefits, but they also serve as excellent cover for people approaching your home.

No tree should be planted so close to the house that someone could climb into an upper window or onto a roof from it. Shrubby should be planted so that accessible windows are not obscured from view. In addition, all trellises and vines capable of supporting a climber should be removed from the side of the house. Don't panic and cut away all growing things, but do guard interior security more carefully by checking security devices on upstairs windows and doors.

### Fences, walls and hedges

Perhaps one of the greatest protections for your home is an adequate property barrier. Fences, walls, and hedges deter would-be intruders and bring inhabitants a sense of psychological well-being. They define property lines and can prevent criminals from surveying your property at close range to determine the advantages of entering. Climbing any of these barriers is a trespassing offense.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. W. R. Van Dresser, Dean, Extension Division, Cooperative Extension Service, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia 24061.

The Virginia Cooperative Extension Service by law and purpose is dedicated to serve all people on an equal and nondiscriminatory basis.  
An Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer

A simple alarm system attached to the unlocked gate leading to your front door can warn you at an early time of entry, be it friendly or hostile.

Before you begin enclosing your grounds, check with the community for rules covering property barriers. Remember that you are responsible for injuries barriers may cause; and under the "attractive nuisance" doctrine followed by most state courts, property owners can be sued if it is proven that the property owner maintained a structure or object that would attract a child and cause an injury. A borderline fence may serve as proof that you attempted to keep children out, but the fence itself may serve as a hazard to children. The barrier fence should keep children and trespassers out without causing unnecessary injury.

If pedestrians and people in cars can see your house, it is less likely to be burglarized. High, solid walls of stone or brick have a major disadvantage—if they are solid and high enough to be effective barriers, they may also cut off the view of the house.

### Type of fencing

Most people settle on a wooden picket fence or a woven wire fence as a property barrier. A wooden picket fence of moderate height is not an effective barrier because it can be climbed. It does show private property, however, and is not likely to cause injury. Woven-wire fences are a bit more dangerous for children, since their feet can slip on the wire. They are manufactured with cut-off top wires that remain as short spikes or with the ends bent and rounded around each other. The spikes do serve as a better deterrent to climbers, but the curved ends do not cause injury.

### A good combination

Hedges are fairly good barriers, but the ordinary privet hedge can easily be broken through. Thick hedges have the same disadvantages as solid walls. Low thorn hedges, such as barberry, American holly and multiflora rose, are good barriers. **The most effective fence combination is a hedge with a round-topped woven fence.**

## safeguarding outbuildings

### Problems of space and isolation

The greater the distance included within the space of your living area, including surrounding buildings and yard, the greater the space that must be defended, and the easier it is for invasion. The greater the isolation of your home and other buildings, the more defenseless those buildings become.



## Lighting

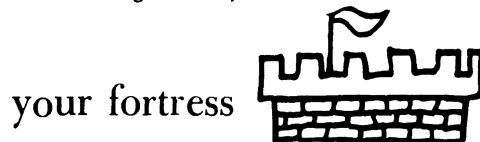
Lighting serves as a major barrier to isolation. Garages and tool sheds should have two lights mounted over the entrance and, if the garage is separated from the house, additional lighting located along the pathway between the house and the garage is also encouraged. Keep vacant lots and spaces between buildings mowed.

Additional exits into the garage should have sturdy doors and be equipped with a dead-bolt lock or slide bolt. Make sure all out-of-the-way windows on basements and garages have bars or grills covering them.

## Garage door

Opening and closing the garage door may also provide a safety hazard. Electronic door-opening mechanisms do allow opening the door without getting out of the car, but unfortunately many of them are also easily opened by radio transmissions from low-flying aircraft and other electromagnetic disturbances. Once the door is open, your home and you may become vulnerable to attack. Try, instead, mounting a door opening control lock on a post outside the garage that can be reached from the car.

Keep your car(s) in the garage to cut down on the chances of its being stolen. In the winter this will insure better starting ability in case of an emergency.



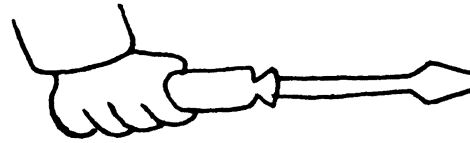
*Suppose someone has decided to burglarize your house. He has found a workable approach, and he is trying to enter your house. Now you must depend upon the interior safety features of your house to keep him outside.*

## LOCKS

One of the most important security precautions against burglars is an adequate system of locks. Twenty-five percent of today's burglaries could be avoided if homes used adequate locks.

Do not use five-pin tumble-action locks, rim-locking devices, double-action locks or night locks that operate from the inside with a twist button. Do not use a lock which operates with a bolt that is wedged, beveled, or held in place by a spring. These spring and tumbler locks can be opened

easily from the outside by "celluloiding" (pushing back the bolt with a piece of celluloid, credit card, or other rigid material).



Use a dead-bolt lock or self-locking dead lock on all exterior doors. The term "dead bolt" means that the bolt can be moved only by turning the knob or key and cannot be sprung, jimmied or celluloided. The latch or bolt should protrude one-half inch out of the lock when the bolt or latch is in the locked position, or it should have interlocking bolts and strikes.

The dead-bolt lock should be mounted one-third of the way down from the top of the door. All locks should be mounted with 2½-inch screws.

For double protection, use a door chain lock which has a chain guard that locks with a key. The lock and key should be located on the inside of the doorframe, securing the chain which is fastened to the door. The locking device should be located on the door and doorframe so that the chain will not allow the door to be opened more than 2 inches, and preferably 1 inch. The chain links should be welded together and made of strong metal to prevent the chain from breaking easily if the door is being opened.

One lock on a door is not sufficient; two or three locking devices are a reasonable number. More than three locks can be a fire hazard.

## DOORS

Locks are not a good security device unless they are mounted on sturdy doors. All exterior doors should have a solid core. Thin-paneled and hollow-core doors should be lined with metal sheets if possible. Doors with glass panels should be eliminated, or the panels replaced with laminated security glass. The best type of exterior door should be completely solid except for mail slots and peep-holes. Glass panels located on the sides of doors should be eliminated or replaced with laminated security glass.

The door should be secured to the door frame with 3-inch screws in the hinges. The hinges on the exterior door should have non-removable hinge pins. The door frame should be as strong and solid as the door. The door should fit the door frame snugly to prevent the burglar from pushing, moving or jiggling the door loose. Use metal strips to

eliminate any cracks between the door and door frame to prevent the burglar from prying the door open.

If possible, have the exterior doors open outward instead of inward. Doors opening inward can be kicked and pushed open easily; however, doors opening outward can not be pushed or kicked past the door jam.

### Mail slots and peepholes

Mail slots should be placed in the door away from the door knob to prevent the burglar from reaching the door knob and lock with his hand or an instrument.

Peepholes should be mounted in the exterior doors to view strangers. The peephole should be as small as possible to prevent the burglar from forcing a screwdriver into its frames and pushing it back, enabling him to reach the door knob or lock.

Patio, French and Dutch doors are difficult to safeguard against burglars. Patio doors should be made of laminated security glass and a crossbar locking device installed across the center can be placed on the door trap parallel to the floor and ceiling. The bar screws onto the door and is secured by a key-locked chain and latch on the frame. Even a strong wooden or metal bar between the door edge and the verticle frame will prevent the door from being opened easily.

On French doors, use steel padlocks at the top and bottom of the door.

*Dutch doors cannot be secured from burglars with any type of lock.*

Storm doors should not be relied on for protection of your home, but they should be made of laminated security glass and secured with a dead-bolt cylinder lock. This lock cannot be reached from the outside or kicked in or picked. It employs a dead bolt which slides into a slot and locks into place with two keys. This lock is also a good security device for any type of glass-paneled door or jalousie door.

Screen doors do not protect your home from burglars. A burglar can easily break or cut through the screen and unlock the door. Many screen doors are locked with an ineffective hooking device which can be unhooked with a small wire.

### KEYS

Locks are of no benefit to the home owner unless the keys are properly guarded. Do not hide

keys outside of your home, because burglars are aware of most hiding places. The safest place for keys is on you. If you want an extra key outside your home, leave it with a trusted neighbor. Do not identify your house keys with your name and address. If a burglar finds them he knows the location of your home and has the means to easily enter it. In this case you will find it difficult to convince the police or insurance company that a forcible entry was made.

Change locks or re-key locks when moving into a new home which has been occupied by another family. The former tenant may not have given all of the keys to you, and this may be a security risk if he gave extra keys to friends and dishonest acquaintances.

### WINDOWS

The first step in securing windows against burglars is to replace the glass with a laminated security glass. This type of glass cannot be cut with a glass cutter or broken easily by the burglar. Secondly, each window in your home should have a lock of some type. The single-twist lock which comes with most sash windows gives little protection by itself. On sash windows and conventional double-hung windows, use security glass, single-twist locks and a lock which locks without a key but requires a key for opening. Be sure to place the key close to the window in case it is needed for an emergency.



The awning-type window with security glass offers the best protection against burglars. This window has panels which operate separately with a crank, and for added protection a key-operated lock can be installed on each panel.

## SAFES

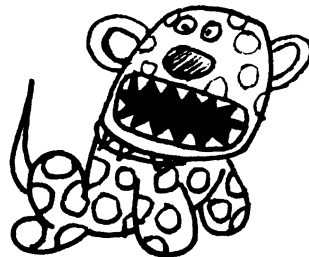
Many families use safes in their homes as a means of protecting their valuables from burglars; however, there is no safe which is absolutely secure from burglars. There are many types of safes available, but the most secure safe is a round door safe, embedded in concrete and with a door made of tempered steel. You should clear the dial on any combination safe each time you open it and change the combination every 5 years. Do not allow anyone to watch you opening the safe. Because no safe is absolutely secure from burglars, all valuables and important papers should be placed in a safe deposit box at your bank.

## ALARMS

Of all the security devices available, the burglar is most disturbed by burglar alarms. There are numerous types of alarms, including battery and electrical alarms, photo-electric alarms and the intruder-chaser alarms. These alarms give little protection to your home because each window and door has to have a separate alarm, and all other areas of your home are not burglar proof. **The best type of alarm is the radar beam alarm** because it can sense movements in all parts of the home, not only at your windows and doors. This alarm can even penetrate walls and ceilings.

No matter what type of alarm system you use, it should protect the entire house and not just one or two windows and doors. All parts and levels of your home should be protected efficiently.

**If you have an alarm system, use a window sticker to let the burglar know.** Many times the burglar will not enter homes having alarms.



## DOGS

Dogs have long been used as a means of protecting home and property. They can easily detect an intruder, and their built-in noisemaker will many times scare him away.

Dogs, however, are usually recommended as a last resort; they require more cost in time and money than almost any mechanical device. If you should decide to buy, train, and use one, however, put him inside the house when you are away (and

at night) to keep burglars outside—rather than keeping him outdoors where he may be incapacitated by an intruder.



## GUNS

The use of guns for protection is a highly-debated issue. They can be ineffective. They can be downright dangerous. There are many accounts of family members or friends being accidentally injured or even killed by weapons purchased to route or capture intruders. Even if accidents are avoided, you might end up providing a new weapon to the people you are seeking protection from.

### Gun safety suggestions

If you do decide to keep guns in your home as a deterrent to burglars, be sure to follow these suggestions:

1. Instruct all family members in their use and care.
2. Store guns properly in a safe place away from children, and be sure they are never loaded during storage.
3. If possible, keep guns under lock and key in a place not easily detected by an intruder.

## property inventory list

### Keep it up-to-date

Despite the most elaborate security precautions, burglaries still occur. To increase the chances that stolen property will be returned, every household needs an up-to-date personal-property inventory list. The list should include a listing of all property in the house. Include in the inventory a description of the item, its brand and model number, serial number, size; color, identifying scratches, date purchased, cost and photographs of valuable jewelry and antiques.

## marking your property

### Use Social Security number

Burglars avoid homes which use a personal-property identification system. The system includes marking the most valuable possessions in the home. To mark possessions, an electric etching pencil is used and your Social Security number is engraved on appliances, guns, cameras, etc. These numbers should be placed on the base or rear part of the item. This method of marking is permanent and cannot be removed easily from the items by the burglar; and, therefore, he avoids stealing them.

Use decals from the police department advising potential burglars that the home is a participant in "operation identification."

## security factors in choosing a home

### Location

There are some general characteristics that may determine whether or not a home is relatively safe. Consider these general questions in evaluating the location of a particular house:

1. Look closely at local safety enforcement. Is the police force honest and mobile? Inquire about how frequently they would patrol your neighborhood and how quickly they can answer calls.
2. Check the level of crime in the community, whether or not streets are well-lighted, how clean the streets are (a sloppy street may invite intruders). Finally, check into the rate of catastrophe in the area.
3. The position of a dwelling place may also affect its security. A corner house is inherently more secure than one in the middle of a block or on a dead-end street. Homes on curving roads are less visible than those on straight streets and, therefore, are less secure.

There are more specific things to notice when you're selecting a home, or at least things you should be safety-conscious of. But remember that houses should, above all else, be livable. Being negligent of security is not recommended, but neither is selecting a "fortress" that is unattractive and uncomfortable.

### Type of house

Two-story or multi-story homes offer more security because of fewer openings at ground level, but they pose a serious fire hazard. Ranch houses, because they are so spread out, may give burglars the opportunity of entering and working in one end of the house without even being heard at the other end.

Entryways should face the street, or at least be visible from the street without a lot of shrubbery obstructing viewing. The entrance and rear doors and the door between the garage and house, if the garage is attached, should be secure against intruders.

It is a good idea to have a locksmith check the condition of locks on all doors, garage doors, and accessible windows. Follow his recommendations.

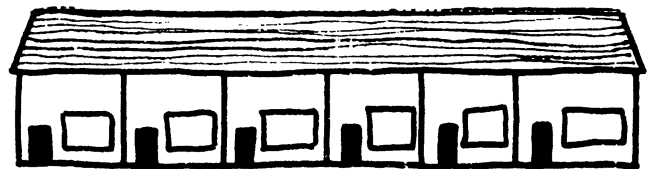
## neighborhood security system

### Know each other's plans

You and your neighbors can be your community's best security device by participating in a neighborhood security system. This system begins with an awareness of the neighbors' living patterns and sharing of information concerning trips, vacations, etc. By knowing each other's living patterns, you and your neighbors can be alert to strangers and strange vehicles in the neighborhood.

If suspicious-looking strangers or strange vehicles do appear in your neighborhood, write down a description of the stranger, the car's license number, color, make, etc. in case a home is burglarized. Do not overlook service vans, because in daylight hours many burglars pose as repairmen.

Neighborhoods who cooperate in this security system and are concerned about the safety of the neighborhood have very low burglary rates.



selection of an apartment

### Talk to tenants

No one wants to move into an apartment—particularly a cooperative apartment or condominium—to find out the area or building suffers from a crime wave. To insure that this doesn't happen, begin by asking current tenants about the building. If they will not supply you with information, try speaking to employees of the building as well as to members of the local police precinct.

### Get complete information

To gain an idea of the security of the building, find answers to the following:

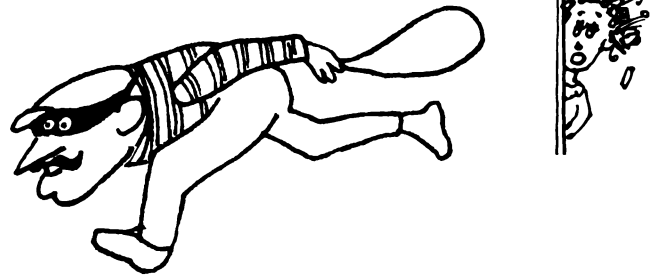
- Is the building close to public transportation? (The route to it should be well-lighted and well-traveled.)
- Does a superintendent or building manager live on the premises?
- Does the building have a doorman or guard, particularly during evening hours between 4:00 P.M. and midnight? If not, does it have a door-opener intercom system that preferably has voice communication?

- Is the front door locked at all times?
- Are there any other unguarded or easy ways to enter the building, including the roof and fire escapes?
- At night, are the front entrance and perimeter of the building well-lighted?
- If the building is close enough to other buildings to permit an intruder to jump to its roof? Are hatchways and skylights on your building securely fastened on the inside?
- Is the entrance to the building approached from the street? Buildings with off-the-street entrances, such as courtyards, should be avoided.
- Is the laundry room located either on the same floor as the apartments or in a secure area, such as a well-protected basement or the lobby? At least check to see if there is a laundry "buddy system" where several people use the facilities together so no one needs to be in the room alone. Downgrade buildings where laundries are open to the public.
- Are the mailboxes in a most desirable location prominently displayed in the lobby? Are they in a blind alcove?
- Are apartments single-loaded (running along one side of the corridor with the other side open or enclosed) or are they double-loaded (running along both sides of the corridor)? Single-loaded corridors are preferable and double-loaded short corridors are preferable to long corridors. Be sure neither includes hidden space, such as incinerator closets.
- Is the front door to the apartment made of steel in a steel frame? Does it contain a peephole? Does it open into the apartment with the hinge pins on the inside?
- Does the corridor have any windows facing narrow interior courtyards? These windows need additional security protection.
- For apartments in buildings with only two or three stories or apartments on lower levels, are there any ladders or large pieces of wood stored nearby or tall trees an agile burglar could climb?
- The general appearance of the building can tell you a lot about security and the attitude of tenants. A dirty or sloppy building with signs of neglect or outright vandalism should be avoided. A combination of poor appear-

ance and apartment doors with many locks is a sure sign of low security.

#### Who are the tenants?

- Finally, the type of tenant population is also a significant security factor. Buildings housing young couples with children tend to have much higher security than buildings that house all single people, whether young or old. Young tenants may make light of security measures, and often older singles are economically and physically unable to take part in cooperative security measures. Much of the security of an apartment house depends on a cooperative venture by the tenants.



### a burglar in your home!

If you are there, too . . .

**If you're a victim of a burglary and are at home when he breaks in, try to leave the house quickly and call the police as soon as possible.** If you can't leave the house undetected, lock all the doors between yourself and the intruder. If a telephone is in the room, call the police. If a telephone is not available, summon help through an open window. The burglar will usually leave when he hears you call.

**If you are confronted by the burglar, be passive and don't try to capture him.** His behavior is unpredictable, and he can be dangerous.

**If you have been burglarized while you were away from home, do not touch or move anything in your house, and call the police immediately.** When the police arrive, check the house carefully and give them a list of missing items, with a description and serial number if possible.

### basic security precautions

#### WAYS TO DISCOURAGE BURGLARS

There is no absolute way to prevent burglaries, but you can create an environment in which burglaries are less likely to occur.

## ways to discourage burglars

### Daily routine:

1. Maintain an adequate system of door locks and alarms.
2. When answering the door, use peephole or interview grill; never allow strangers to enter before checking his credentials and identity.
3. Do not leave notes on exterior of home indicating you will be gone for a short time.
4. Use an all-purpose security light.
5. Do not advertise or sell items in the paper using your name, address and phone number. Use a box number.
6. Do not hide keys around house exterior.
7. If you are a woman living alone, use your initials rather than Mrs., Miss, or Ms. on door, mailbox, and in telephone directory.
8. Place jewelry, negotiable securities, and other expensive valuables in a bank-deposit box.
9. Don't make tools available to the intruder. Put ladders and screwdriver, crowbar, etc. in a locked room, basement or garage.
10. Keep all garage doors locked.
11. Lock all doors and windows on all levels of the home at night or when leaving home.
12. If you are leaving home for a few hours, leave the radio and a light on in the bedroom or upstairs level. Don't give your house a closed-down appearance.
13. Never leave credit cards in unoccupied home.



### When away from home:

1. Create appearance that house is occupied.
2. Cancel deliveries - mail, newspaper, milk, etc.
3. Turn telephone bell down if possible.
4. Use a timing device to turn on a bedroom light and radio.
5. Notify the police and neighbors that you will not be home.
6. Park a second car in the driveway.
7. Arrange for someone to cut the grass.
8. In winter, arrange for someone to shovel snow from your walk.
9. Arrange for someone to drive a car up and down the driveway and walk around the outside of the house after a snowfall.
10. Do not put an announcement of your absence in the paper or discuss it with strangers.
11. Leave an extra key with a neighbor so that your home may be inspected by police or a neighbor if necessary.
12. Set trash cans inside.
13. Turn heat down, not off; frost or ice on windows indicates an unoccupied house.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barnes, Robert Earl, *Are You Safe From Burglars?*, Doubleday, Garden City, New York (1971).

"How to Burglarproof the Neighborhood", *Changing Times*, May 1973, pp. 41-42.

*How to Make Your Home Secure*, Eaton Corporation, Lock and Hardware Division, 402 Theodore Fremd Avenue, Rye, New York 10580.

Hunter, George (pseud.), *How to Defend Yourself, Your Family, and Your Home - A Complete Guide to Self Protection*, David McKay Company, Inc., New York (1967).

Kaufmann, Ulrich, *How to Avoid Burglary, Housebreaking and Other Crimes*, Crown Publishers, Inc., New York (1967).

Mandell, Mel, *Being Safe*, Warner Paperback Library, New York (1972).

Newman, Oscar, *Defensible Space - Crime Prevention Through Urban Design*, Macmillan Company, New York (1972).

*Safe at Home - A Guide to Residential Security*, American District Telegraph Company (1973).

*Support Your Local Burglar*, Public Relations Department, State Farm Fire and Casualty Company, 112 East Washington Street, Bloomington, Illinois 61707.