



This issue of SecurAlert focuses on home security and provides some valuable tips from a host of experts and sources that you can use all year round.

FOCUS ON HOME SECURITY

Welcome to Summer! Summertime is a great season to enjoy the warm weather, spend some quality time with your family and take that vacation you have been talking about since January! But it's also a time when, according to the FBI, home burglaries spike due to vacationing homeowners and the tell tale signs they leave that signal that their house is "home alone!"



According to the FBI, a burglary occurs somewhere in the US every 15.4 seconds, making it the most common threat to our homes.

Burglary 101

- A burglary is the crime of breaking and entering a dwelling for the purpose of committing a felony (stealing your valuables).
- 85% of all home burglaries occur between 10:00 AM and 3:00 PM when no one is usually home.
- Burglars spend an average 8 to 12 minutes in the home of a victim and target homes that appear to be empty of occupants
- As you would imagine, a burglar's favorite items to steal include cash, jewelry, electronics (laptops, DVRs, small devices), silver, guns and anything the burglar can sell easily
- The first stop most thieves go to is the master bedroom, where most high valued items reside
- Most burglars are not caught; only 13% of all reported burglaries are actually solved
- Average loss to a homeowner: \$2,100 ..the fact that many burglaries can be prevented: PRICELESS!



Homes without a home-security/alarm system have a significantly higher break-in rate, so invest in an alarm system to protect your home ... and use it. Many homeowners have a system but fail to arm it when they go out and rarely activate the system's "night mode" when they go to bed (on average, only 10% of homeowners arm their alarm systems at night).

Alarms

- Most of us ignore the sirens of car and house alarms because they go off regularly and we just assume they are false alarms, so make sure your house alarm is connected to an alarm monitoring station to ensure someone will respond.
- Consider purchasing a system that will actually yell out in an urgent voice the exact location of the break in, in addition to sounding a siren (e.g., "INTRUSION DETECTED: REAR DOOR"); that way the system will attract the attention of neighbors and encourage the thief to leave since his exact location has been announced!
- Consider a security system equipped with motion detectors in addition to door and window alarm sensors. Certain alarm systems allow your home to have separate zones so specific areas can always stay armed. Also, a panic button can be hooked up to your alarm system's central server for added protection inside your home.
- Reflective numbers outside on the front of your home will make it easy for police, fire and EMS to find your house in the event of alarm activation or 911 call.
- And don't forget to put out two alarm signs – one in front of the house AND one in the rear of the house (where most criminals will try to get in)

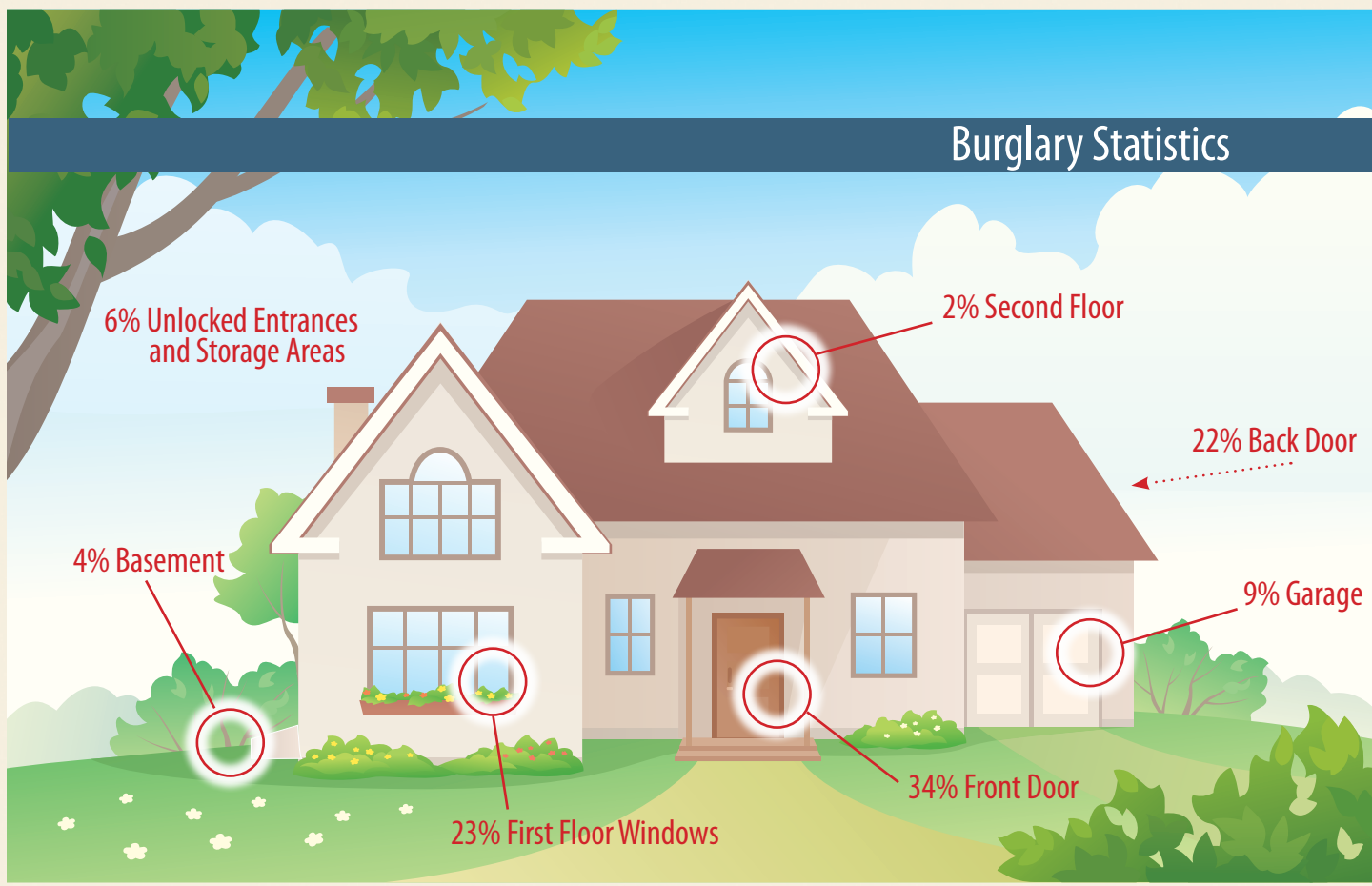
Doors and Locks

Doors and windows are the primary means criminals get into your house! To prevent or make it extremely difficult for a criminal to force his way into your home consider these suggestions:

- Use a solid core or metal door for all entrance points
- Use a quality, heavy-duty deadbolt lock with a one-inch throw bolt
- Use a quality, heavy-duty knob-in-lock set with a dead-latch mechanism
- Use a heavy-duty, four-screw, strike plate with 3-inch screws that penetrate into the wooded door frame
- If you have a solid front door, install a peephole so you can see who is at the door without having to open it



- Lock your doors and windows when you are away...even if you are just driving to do an errand; it just takes seconds for a burglar to strike
- To avoid being locked out, place a spare key in a combination lock box on your property and leave another with a trusted neighbor
- Be careful to whom you give your alarm codes and keys; some alarms now allow you to give each individual their own code so as to monitor their use.
- Keep a wooden dowel or stick in the track of sliding glass doors to prevent them from being opened from the outside
- Make sure your garage door has a good dead bolt on it – a garage door is usually one of the weakest points for a criminal to use to get into your house
- Keep your car locked even when it's in the garage
- Make sure garage lights can be turned on from inside the house or have a sensor that is triggered by your vehicle so you don't have to walk into a dark garage
- Change your garage-door opener code!!! Did you know that new openers come with factory-set codes that are meant to be changed, but many people neglect to do so? Burglars will drive around neighborhoods with common brands of remote openers, looking for garage doors that will open.





Home Safety While on Vacation

- The biggest mistake homeowners make is putting a timer on one or two lights and setting these to go on and off at exactly the same time every day – this is a telltale sign that no one is home!



Around Your Home

- *Keep ladders, garbage cans, building supplies and tools locked up out of view so you don't provide an intruder with the means to break into your home*
- *Make sure privacy fences don't provide cover for the burglar to break into a side or rear window or door*
- *Never put your name on your mailbox. Anyone can call directory assistance, get your number, and find out you aren't home.*
- *Don't hide a spare key near your front door; burglars know all the hiding places. Leave a spare key with a trusted neighbor instead*
- *Trim shrubs and trees so they do not provide hiding places for an intruder. Remove tree limbs that could allow someone to climb to an upper-story window or balcony.*
- *Keep all points of entry to your home well-lit. Consider installing motion-sensor lights on the rear and sides of your home and position them in out-of-reach places so they can't easily be turned off by a would-be thief.*
- *If you travel a lot, consider installing surveillance cameras around your property – with viewing access through the Internet – will allow you to keep an eye on your home while you're gone.*
- *Consider hiding valuables in your kitchen – that's the last place a bad guy will go; so stash expensive jewelry inside empty cereal boxes or other containers, especially if you will be out of town for a while*

- Set lights on timers or light sensors to turn on and off in the evening – place these in several locations in your home that can be seen from outside. The times the lights go on and off should vary by room to simulate someone actually home. A TV or radio can also be set on a timer to add to the illusion that someone is at home
- Suspend newspaper delivery so papers don't pile up in front of your house.
- Put your mail on hold
- Tell your neighbors you will be away so they can notify the police if they see suspicious activity
- Ask a neighbor to keep an eye on your house and pick up any mail, fliers, newspapers, packages, etc.



- If you use a yard service, make sure they come to your house while you're away. An overgrown lawn is a good sign that no one is home.
- Let your alarm service know you will be away so they notify the police department immediately if they get an alarm signal from your home (as opposed to calling you first to verify the alarm)
- Leave a car in your driveway, or ask a neighbor to park there.
- Don't record a new message on your home answering machine indicating where you are or how long you'll be away. You'll be issuing an open invitation for someone to rob your house.
- Leave shades, curtains and blinds in their normal positions. Covered windows during the daytime indicate an empty house.
- When returning from your vacation, make a perimeter sweep of your home before you go inside to inspect for any indication of a break-in; if you see an open or broken door or window or evidence of a burglary, immediately call 911 – **DO NOT ENTER THE HOUSE**



For more Information about home security click on the links below:

- www.crimedoctor.com
- www.homesecuritysource.com
- www.protectyourhome.com
- www.crimepreventiontips.org