

PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR HOME

If we can't feel safe in our own homes, where can we feel safe? Being burglarized leaves us feeling like we – and our personal space – have been violated. It's a feeling that does not easily go away. How can we protect ourselves and our homes? First of all, improve your home security, get to know your neighbors, and always report crime. Listen to "gut feelings" and call police if you see something that just doesn't seem right. Another way is to understand the basics of burglary.

KEY ELEMENTS TO HOUSE SELECTION: Burglars select or target a house based on a number of key factors, including:

- Familiarity with the target and convenience of location
- Occupancy
- Visibility
- Vulnerability or security
- Potential rewards

FAMILIARITY AND CONVENIENCE: Burglars tend to commit crimes relatively close to where they live. Houses most vulnerable to burglars:

- *Houses near ready pool of offenders:* Examples include large youth populations, drug addicts, shopping centers, sports arenas, transit stations, and urban, high-crime areas.
- *Houses near major thoroughfares or close to pedestrian paths.* Heavy traffic areas bring outsiders into a neighborhood, so residents often are not concerned if they see people they cannot identify.
- *Houses previously burglarized:* Previously burglarized houses are up to 4 times more likely to be burglarized again and more likely within 6 weeks of initial crime. Reason? Often the factors that made the house vulnerable cannot be changed as location or occupancy and homeowners often replace key, more valuable items.
- *Houses near burglarized houses:* Houses may be of similar floor plan, neighbors of similar life style, with similar possessions, etc.

OCCUPANCY: Most burglars do not target occupied houses but seek entry when residents are away from home. Lifestyle often is a predictor of the risk of burglary: single-parent home, one person home, and younger-occupant homes are more vulnerable. High risk houses:

- *Houses vacant for long periods of time:* Residents with weekend homes, away on vacation, etc. Accumulated mail, open garage doors or carports with absentee vehicles, no lights on inside house, etc., are indicators of absentee residents.
- *Houses routinely vacant during the day:* Houses that appear occupied during the day with activity, vehicle in drive, audible noise from within, and lights on less likely to be burglarized. Even houses near houses occupied during the day are less likely to be burglarized (neighborhood watch).
- *Houses of new residents:* Houses in high mobility areas (e.g., where there many rental properties) tend to be more likely to be burglarized, because most residents do not have well established social networks.
- *Houses without dogs:* Most burglars avoid houses with dogs as dogs either make too much noise or may pose a physical threat.

VISABILITY: Can You See Me Now? Burglars consider the risk of being seen coming and going, and select houses accordingly.

- *Houses with cover:* This includes trees and dense shrubs near doors and windows, privacy fences, and latticed or setback porches.
- *Houses that are secluded:* This includes houses situated away from the street or from neighbors, placed on large lots or next to non-residential areas as parks, greenbelts, etc.
- *Houses with poor lighting:* While burglaries are more likely during the day, at night, inadequate lighting helps an offender go unseen.

- *Houses on corners:* Because of traffic, there are often traffic lights and stop signs, which allow an offender time to study the house and its environment. Also, corner houses often have larger lots with less proximity to other neighbors.
- *Houses with concealing architectural design:* Design may be intended to afford more privacy for resident, with less view from neighbors and passersby, but often this design affords an offender the

VULNERABILITY OR SECURITY: How easy is it for a burglar to enter? In about two-thirds of reported US burglaries, the offenders forced entry. In the other third, they entered through unlocked or opened windows and doors. Accessibility Opportunities:

- *Houses with weakened entry points:* Poor building materials or older houses with rusting hinges or locks, worn or decaying door and window frames may make a house more vulnerable to burglary.
- *Houses next to alleys:* Alleys provide distant between neighbors, facilitate access to the back of houses, and provide an escape route from customary street and foot traffic.
- *Houses easily entered through side or back doors:* Side and back doors are the most common entry points.
- *Houses whose residents are careless about security:* Often residents forget to lock up or set alarms when at home or when they are gone.
- *Houses with little or no security:* Burglars are more likely to avoid a house with visible signs of security as wrought iron doors or window guards, sign for monitored alarm, dead bolts, window locks, beware of dog sign, locks on gates, etc.

POTENTIAL REWARDS: If burglary was not profitable, there would be few burglaries. Even burglars have a "Business Plan":

- *Burglars look for signs of wealth:* The size and condition of a house and the type of cars in the drive are indicators of the type and value of a house's contents.
- *Burglars like cash and goods that they can easily carry and sell:* Not being caught is a primary goal and items so cash, jewelry, weapons, electronics, and prescription drugs are items of choice.
- *Burglars usually do not keep stolen items:* Burglars most often dispose of stolen items within 24 hours, selling them to either a pawnshop or a stranger or occasionally trading the items for drugs

**ALWAYS REPORT A BURGLARY
TO HELP MPD ESTABLISH A PATTERN OF BURGLARIES**

911 for burglary in progress
or
901-545-COPS (2677) to file a report.