

Rosie's Home Security Consumer Guide



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Think Like A Burglar Thinks And Protect Your Home From Break-Ins

Let's start by considering some of the most recent statistics (2011 and 2012) from the FBI about the almost 2 million burglaries that occur in the United States annually.

Most of them – almost 75 percent – occur in residences, not in stores or offices. And most of those happen during the day - not at night – perhaps when residents are out of town or at the office or out running errands.

So, if you don't want to become a target for a burglar, you ought to start thinking about what burglars are thinking about when they look at your house. What follows are our top suggestions for securing your home and property, based on the vulnerabilities bad guys hope to find in your doors, your windows, your garage and your possessions.

Of course, you might also want to install a security system, and we'll talk about that later. But to begin with we're giving you the inside info on what burglars are looking for at your house, cabin, condo or apartment and what can scare them away.

Your Front Door And Other Doors | Remember A Burglar Wants to Spend Less Than 60 Seconds Getting Into Your House.

- You need a solid core or solid wood front door with a deadbolt that has a one-inch throw.
- Add a dead-bolted security screen door to the front of your house (and maybe to your back doors) that has been installed with tamper-proof hinges that have non-removable pins.
- Of course, you want good lighting on your walkways, but you might also want to install motion sensor lights.
- Make sure all your doors have bump-proof locks. In bumping, a burglar inserts a special key into your lock, strikes it with a hammer, and presto, the pins in the lock move slightly so the door can be opened. If your locks are more than a few years old, you should replace them with newer technology to thwart bumpers.
- Install wide-angle peepholes in doors that have no adjacent windows.
- Reinforce the door post to make kicking the door in as hard as possible.
- If you have glass sidelights adjacent to the door, make sure the deadbolt is a double cylinder that needs a key to operate both outside and inside. That way the burglar can't smash the glass and open the deadbolt through the hole he has made.
- Remove or trim any shrubs or trees that block the front door area from your neighbors' light of sight.
- It's best not to use any hide-a-key devices. A smart burglar knows what's selling at your local hardware store. Don't hide keys under door mats or potted plants either. If you must hide a key somewhere, do it in your neighbor's yard.



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- Never open the door to anyone you don't know; it can be naïve and potentially dangerous.
- When moving into a new home, re-key everything and do it with bump-key impervious locks and deadbolts.
- If you have a security system, keep it activated when you leave the house and display a notice about your equipment for all to see. Make sure you have a back-up battery for power failures.
- A security video camera prominently displayed is an excellent deterrent, even if it's not connected.

Sliding Glass Doors And Windows.

- If your sliding door or window can be lifted by more than a quarter-inch or a half-inch, it's probably vulnerable to being lifted out of its track. Locking devices can prevent the unit from sliding but might not keep it from being lifted. A wood dowel you install in the track of these units won't help much either. Remove the dowel and install a pin-style lock. Upgrading to up-to-date dual-pane windows will also deter burglars from smashing their way into your house.

Double French doors.

- One special note about double French doors: Even if they have deadbolts, they can still be forced open. But you can get the inactive door leaf securely pin-hinged into the jamb and header with sliding bolt locks. Then drill a hole for a security screw to set into the header lock to prevent the door from being unlocked with a Slim-Jim or similar burglary device. To open the inactive door yourself, you can still remove the screw temporarily.

Your Garage Door And Garage Door Opener.

- The door between the garage and your house should be a solid core, fire-rated door with a good deadbolt.
- Most of the newer electronic garage door openers do not have codes that burglars can "crack," but crooks have become adept at deactivating your system manually and raising the garage door. Then they can work on entering your house from inside the garage. To foil them, remove the opener cord completely. Then get a wooden dowel and screw a tea cup hook in the end of it. Place the dowel in a convenient spot in the garage so you can hook it onto the door release mechanism any time that you might need to do it. There are also new locks you can buy to thwart a burglar using your garage door opener.
- You can also install a manual slide lock on your garage door so that no one can open the door when you're gone on an extended vacation.

Take all this information and share it with your neighbors as well.



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Secure Your Possessions And Property.

- Make a visual record by using a digital or video camera to shoot photos or videos of every area of your home. Include every room and wall, include contents of all drawers and closets, safes, etc. If necessary, go through your attic, garage and any areas outside the house, like a storage unit or a guest house. Zero in on special art objects or pieces of furniture. Try to use ambient lighting without a flash. Take close-ups of model and serial numbers.
- Be sure to take separate shots of valuable electronics, antiques, jewelry or heirlooms. If you have receipts or appraisals for items, photograph those as well. If you have some items with no label, use an inexpensive carbide etching pen to put some small identification marks on property.
- Most cases, your visual record can serve as verification with your insurance company. But it's better to combine photos with a written record of some kind. Fill out a checklist provided by your insurance company.
- Move any valuables like electronic devices or artwork away from windows where burglars might spot them.
- Check out your insurance policy to see what it covers in case of a burglary and upgrade the policy if necessary.

When You're Away From Home...

- Turn off your computer and disconnect it from the Internet. Do not leave personal documents lying around your home office where a burglar/identity thief can easily snag them. Store passwords away from computer.
- Store valuable jewelry, credit cards and spare car keys in places where burglars will be less likely to look. The longer it takes to find things, the more frustrated they will be. The first room, by the way, that they are likely to hit is your master bedroom. So, store valuables someplace else.
- And of course, do all the usual things like stopping mail and newspapers and asking neighbors to watch your home. Maybe you can talk your neighbor into taking out your garbage can to the curb on the usual days when you are out of town.
- Leave blinds and shades open in their usual position.
- Let neighbors know when you're out of town, but don't tell Facebook and don't Tweet about your trip. Don't post photos on social media until you get home.



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Extra Protection For Your House | Don't Help the Burglar.

- If anyone breaks into your car, even while you are out shopping, they can take your insurance info your garage door opener, find your home and get inside quickly. If this should happen to you, call the police and change your garage door opener code as soon as you can
- If you park at an airport lot, remove your garage door opener from the car.
- Don't leave tools like shovels and ladders outside the house where a burglar can use them.
- Buy a dog. Even a small dog that barks a lot can deter a burglar.

Make your entire neighborhood one that burglars will avoid.

Maybe It's Time to Purchase a Security System for Your Home

A 2012 study of convicted burglars in three states that was done by the University of North Carolina at Charlotte came up with a list of things that might stop a burglar from breaking into a house

Alarms, outdoor cameras and surveillance equipment were big deterrents as you might expect. About 60 percent of the burglars said an alarm would cause them to move on to another house, and only 16 percent would try to disable an alarm.

If you're interested in having a security system in your own home, you probably know that these systems do a whole lot more than sound an alarm when someone breaks through your front door.

How The Newest Systems Work

Over the past three years, there's been a revolution in these systems that can greatly increase your peace of mind when you leave home. A lot of it has come about because of the wireless revolution in our telephones.

Not only are people using mobile phones to make phone calls, they're looking at the interior and exterior of their homes to see what's going on. They're locking doors that were left unlocked. They're turning lights on and off and turning the temperature up and down. They're also closing garage doors. And of course, they're activating alarm systems as well.

In the past, homeowners had a choice between hardwiring an alarm system or going wireless. That choice is still there, but if you're interested in the automated extras, you have to go wireless. You'll also have to install compatible equipment: new deadbolt locks on exterior doors; new electronics for your garage door opener; surveillance cameras; a keypad to control the alarm system; a new thermostat; perhaps lights that can be controlled electronically.



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Some devices can help pay for themselves – like the electronic thermostat that can turn down the air conditioner that you forgot to adjust when you left for the weekend. And being able to check the house to make sure that your children got home safely from school can be a priceless feature.

You don't have to have a brand-new house to put in a wireless system. The garage door opener and the cameras need a Wi-Fi connection, but the security company can install that for those devices. Door locks, lighting control and the thermostat do not need Wi-Fi. Your system will then connect to the central monitoring station via cellular signals.

Even if you lose power, your security system doesn't go out. It's equipped with a back-up battery that keeps all your devices going for a day. When the power comes on, the batteries recharge.

It is still possible, of course, to have your home hard-wired with a security system, but it's a lot less disruptive to go wireless. If you hard-wire all your doors and windows, you could end up with a half-mile of wiring in your house, experts tell us. If you go wireless, the risk of paying for service calls to repair problems with wiring will drop dramatically.

How Do You Choose The Right Company For The Job?

Narrow your choices by getting recommendations from friends or neighbors, an insurance agent, or a trusted referral service. Your security company should also be licensed by the Arizona Registrar of Contractors (www.azroc.gov) and have a clean record with the Better Business Bureau. You want someone who has been in business for several years.

To a certain extent, price depends on the size of your home. A house with a lot of glass in it will need more protection than homes with fewer windows.

Generally, you need alarms on doors and windows around the entire perimeter of your home. Some homeowners also have motion detectors installed as well as devices that can pick up the sound of glass breaking. The amount of new electric equipment you installed will also influence the price – like installing video surveillance cameras in entryways or in the backyard.

And of course, installing a security system will help you qualify for discounts on your home insurance.



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