

# Residential Security

For most of us, our home is where we spend most of our time, enjoy our family and sleep. Protecting our homes should be a priority. Unfortunately, for most people it's and afterthought. Simply moving to the suburbs does not guarantee that you will not be a victim of a crime. Each one of us should be actively involved in securing and protecting our lives as well as our property. We should be proactive not reactive. There are some occasions that no matter what precautions we take, we are targeted as victims for theft and other property crimes. However, there are some very simple crime prevention steps we can take which would reduce the opportunity for criminals to take advantage.

## **Lock your doors and windows**

Most burglaries occur without forced entry. In other words, the doors, windows, or garage doors were left open. Locking doors and windows won't guarantee that you won't be victimized. However, locking your residence does make it harder for criminals to gain entry. Sometimes, just hardening the target deters a crime. If you make it just a little harder for a criminal to get into your home, it might take the criminal more time and make it less worth his effort. Make sure all first floor windows are not just shut, but locked. Don't leave your garage door open, even while you are inside the residence.

## **Mark your territory**

In the current age of technology, almost every home has electronic equipment that is small enough for a burglar to conceal. iPods, MP3 players, CD players, DVD players, laptop computers, digital cameras, cell phones and other equipment can be hid under a coat or in a pocket. Engraving your name, address, or other identifying codes on this equipment makes it a lot harder for criminals to dispose of and a lot easier for the police to identify. Keep a list of these items with identifying marks and serial numbers in a safe place. The Forest Park Police Department has several engravers you may use to mark your items. Simply drop your driver's license off at the Police Department and pick up an engraver. Return the engraver when you are finished and pick up your license.

## **Secure your weapons**

If you choose to have a firearm in your home, there are several ways to secure it. If you have young children in the home, the weapon should always be secured in a safe or with a gun lock. The police department will happily supply you with a gun lock if you need one. A gun lock simply prevents the firearm from being fired. A gun safe, is a much better way of securing your weapons. It not only prevents children in the residence from tampering with the weapon, but also reduces the chances of a burglar removing the weapon from the residence. If you have a firearm in your residence, (even if you live alone) the weapon should not be left lying around in plain sight. All weapons should be kept out of view. Ammunition for firearms should also be stored away. Should you choose to purchase a gun safe, most safes are large enough to hold any ammunition which would accompany the firearm. Otherwise, store ammunition in a safe dry area that cannot be reached by children.

## **Alarms Systems**

There are two types of residential alarms available to protect your homes and apartments which cost less than your monthly cable bill. Local alarms are alarms that are only heard inside the residence. Local alarms do not alert the police and are only used to alert the homeowner to the presence of a potential intruder. Local alarms can also be effective in scaring away many intruders. Central station alarms are monitored from a separate facility. When these alarms are tripped, the monitoring facility then notifies the police or fire to respond. This alarm can be silent, thus not notifying the intruder that the police have been called. There are other more costly alarm systems that require personal monitoring and a close circuit system. These systems are typically only used for large estates. Both local alarms and central station alarms can be beneficial to homeowners. Should you choose to install an alarm system, familiarize yourself and everyone in the home with properly using the system. Too many false alarms reduce the effectiveness of the alarm system.

### **Vehicle Safety**

For most of us, our vehicles are a necessary part of everyday life. There are a few safety tips that could reduce criminal damage and theft of our vehicle. Most of these tips are common sense. Do not leave items in your vehicle that might be of value to someone else, DVDs, CDs, brief cases, purses, coats, money, or mail. Do roll up your windows and lock your car doors. Do take removable DVD player and stereo faces inside. Do park your vehicle in the garage whenever possible. Do make sure that custom rims and wheels are locked on.

Remember, if you are not planning to thwart a crime, you are probably not prepared when one does occur. Plan not to be victimized. Be prepared to react hastily in the event you are victimized. The police can help you better, when you are prepared to help yourself.