

# **5 WAYS TO PROTECT YOUR HOME & FAMILY**



**By Billy Brittain**

American homes are victims of burglary about every 15 seconds, according to the U.S. Department of Justice. The typical homeowner suffers a loss of nearly \$2,000 in stolen goods or property damage.

"With the national economy getting worse, burglary is again becoming a more common crime," says Charles Sczuroski, a former police officer and now senior trainer for the National Crime Prevention Council.

If you have a high deductible on your homeowners insurance policy, you'll likely have to pay out of pocket to replace your stolen items. But for a small investment, you can make your home less appealing to burglars in the first place.

## **“TRIM BUSHES AND SHRUBS AGAINST THE HOUSE”**



Bushes, shrubs and trees can offer an intruder places to hide and camouflage signs of a break-in. Trim back any overgrown vegetation so that your home's windows, porches and doors are visible to neighbors and passersby.

"This doesn't cost but a few hours of your time, yet it can make a difference in making your property much less attractive to a burglar,"

## **KEEP DRAPES AND BLINDS CLOSED WHEN NOT AT HOME**



Use shades, drapes and other window treatments to keep potentially tempting household items out of view. Burglary is sometimes a crime of opportunity and "window-shopping" is one way criminals choose potential targets.

## **DON'T ADVERTISE NEW PURCHASES**



Be sure not to draw undue attention to your home by discarding empty boxes at the curb with your trash -- a big problem during the holidays.

"By putting out boxes from a new flat-screen television, video game system, a laptop computer or other expensive home electronics at the curb, you're showing a potential burglar exactly what new and valuable items are now available in your home,"

## **MOTION DETECTORS**



Adequate nighttime illumination is critical, because a dark or poorly lit property makes it easier for a burglar to go about unseen.

"The best deterrent for crime and therefore safety for your home and family is to install motion-sensing security," Motion-sensing security lights are ... activated when motion is detected and the sudden change from darkness to the bright light will not only startle intruders, but also provide a visual alert to the homeowner and neighbors."

## **REINFORCE ENTRY POINTS**



Sixty percent of all burglaries take place at ground floor doors and windows, so it makes sense to "harden" these entry points.

All entry doors should be solid wood or steel-wrapped wood-core doors, he says. Hollow-core doors or rickety old wood-panel doors can be kicked in easily and don't offer much of a deterrent. New solid (slab) doors cost around \$100. Installation, of course, will cost extra. However, an experienced home handyman can tackle the job with the help of instructions.

# INSTALL DEADBOLTS



"A deadbolt should be installed on every exterior entry door," says Melissa Richards, Home Depot's safety and security merchant, adding that the bolt should have a throw of at least one inch. Insurance companies and locksmiths recommend Grade 1 or Grade 2 American National Standards Institute deadbolt locks on exterior entryways.

The two main types of deadbolts are single and double cylinder locks. A single cylinder deadbolt, , has a keyed opening on one side and a knob that can be turned by hand on the other. A double cylinder deadbolt lock, is keyed on both sides.

Double cylinder locks should be used on a door with a glass section or one located near a window. "If the glass is broken and someone tries to reach in to open the door, they won't be able to."

Consult local LOCKSMITH before buying new double cylinder deadbolt locks, to be sure it meets building codes. Some communities don't allow their use due to safety concerns: They can impede a speedy exit from a home in case of fire. And when upgrading any entry door lockset, make sure that the strike plate is properly secured with strong 3-inch screws into the home's structural framing (studs).