

Home and Neighborhood Safety

In these times of economic distress, many people are concerned about the threat of rising crime in their communities. Fortunately, there are ways to help protect your home and your neighborhood from crime. From simple steps like keeping your doors locked, keeping lights on and being aware of your surroundings at all times there are plenty of things you can do to prevent crime.



Work with your neighbors to keep your neighborhood clean and orderly. Keep spare keys with a trusted neighbor or nearby shopkeeper, not under a doormat or planter, on a ledge, or in the mailbox. Set timers on lights when you're away from home or your business is closed, so they appear to be occupied. Illuminate or eliminate places an intruder might hide: the spaces between trees or shrubs, stairwells, alleys, hallways, and entry ways. It has never been more important for citizens to work together to prevent crime.

Many people travel during the holiday season to visit friends and relatives. Criminals are aware of this fact and look for houses that are empty during this time of year. The last thing you want to come home to is a house that has been burglarized, so here are a few things you can do to protect you home.

Make Your House Look Occupied

The best way to keep a burglar away from your home while you are gone is to make it appear that you never left. Start by temporarily stopping the delivery of the daily mail and newspaper. When papers are allowed to pile up on the front porch or walk, criminals are alerted that people have gone out of town. Put timers on lights inside the house so they turn on every night. The same can be done for television sets will help give the appearance that people are at home. Once you have things in place to make the house look occupied, remember to do one final thing: turn off the ringer for your phone. All the work you have done to create the illusion that you are home can be shattered by a ringing phone that is never answered.

Ask a friend or relative to stop by your home periodically if you will be gone for several days. This allows them to keep an eye on the place, and will show any criminals who might be watching that someone is going inside on a regular basis. If no one is able to do this for you, try to leave a parked car in the driveway while you are away to make it seem like someone is at home.

Burglars who think they have found an easy target can break into your home quickly. One way to discourage this is by to put up signs or stickers that state you have a working security system in place. The last thing a criminal wants is to set off an alarm, and if they see the signs they will think your home is not worth the effort.

Turn On the Lights, a Bright Idea in Crime Fighting

It can cost about \$500 to get a new color TV if the old one is stolen; and \$2,000 or more to get a new computer or laptop if a burglar takes the one you own now. But it costs only about a dime to keep a light burning all night on your front door - and another dime for the back door. Those dimes could be very well spent if they protect all of your other valuables, and that small expense can be an important investment in crime prevention. It is a simple fact that burglars and thieves don't like bright places. They work in the dark. If one house is brightly lit, and another has no lights, criminals generally head for the dark one.

So, deny a burglar the opportunity to rip you off. Turn on exterior lights around your house through the night. It is a bright idea - in more ways than one.

The Next Time You Leave Your Car, Leave it Empty

Criminals love to go window shopping. They walk down neighborhood streets or go through shopping center parking lots looking through the windows of parked cars to see what people have left behind. All too often, those thieves are given an opportunity: a car owner has left some valuables - GPS, Cell Phone, Gym Bags, maybe gifts for a loved one - in clear view. It takes only seconds for the criminal to break the car window and take off with the merchandise. Don't give thieves that kind of opportunity. Make sure you leave nothing of value in plain view in your car. Take valuables away with you, or put them in the trunk. Remember, when you leave your car, leave it empty. And the thief will leave empty handed.

Violence Prevention: Mugging and Assaults

In this day and age, it seems that more and more people are being assaulted when they are in a vulnerable situation. Be alert and aware of your surroundings at all times even during the day. Muggers are looking for a quick buck and an easy target. Be aware of the possibility of muggers in any community or public venue. Stay alert and aware of your surroundings. As with many types of criminals, a mugger is looking for the element of surprise. Violent crime can infiltrate anyone's life at any time, but when you are careful and take the right precautions you are able to greatly reduce that risk.

Suspicious Activities You Should Report to Law enforcement

By reporting suspicious activity in your neighborhood and community, you can help law enforcement agencies deter and reduce crime, thereby keeping your home, family and fellow citizens as safe as possible.

Some examples of suspicious activities:

- Someone who appears to have no purpose wandering through your neighborhood.
- Groups of young people or adults gathering together at a specific location.
- A vehicle frequently driving around your block or within a specific area.
- A person looking into parked vehicles and/or moving from vehicle to vehicle.
- A person who is selling, conducting business out of his car, van, truck, or other vehicle
- A lot of "traffic" or visitors to one residence, who stay for very short periods of time, such as five minutes or less. This could involve the sale of drugs.

Immediately call the Montgomery County Police if you observe suspicious activity. You might have the information needed to solve a crime.

Emergency: Dial 911

Anonymous Crime Tip Line: 240-773-TIPS (8477)

Non-Emergency Number: 301-279-8000

Remember – A quick and accurate description of events, vehicles, and persons can make all the difference in apprehending a potential criminal. Any type of activity or circumstance that seems unusual should be reported.