

Menasha Police Straight Talk on Residential Security

The length of time a burglar spends attempting to get into your home is proportional to the probability of detection. The chance of being seen and possibly identified is the burglar's biggest fear. Most burglars allow themselves one to two minutes to get into a home. Beyond that, the risk of detection becomes too great. A good security strategy slows burglars and extends them past their self-imposed time limits. The fear of crime and its associated victimization is so pervasive in our society, people sometimes take extreme steps to prevent becoming a victim. In fact, the alarm industry has grown significantly due to this fear among residents. For an alarm system to be truly effective, a homeowner must first address the physical security of their home. When considering home security, a homeowner needs to "invest" in quality security hardware and ensure it is properly installed. Unfortunately, homeowners cannot always assume a new home contains quality security hardware. The cost of a new home is no indication of the level of security installed. **A high quality lock installed in a door attached to a weak frame remains vulnerable to forced entry, and is equivalent to putting a padlock on a paper bag.**

In order for an exterior door to be an effective barrier between the burglar and their target, three aspects of a door assembly must be addressed and secured: *the door, the door frame, and the lock.*

THE DOOR

Exterior doors are often constructed of soft-wood products filled with insulating material and covered by veneer or metal sheeting. To improve security, it is extremely important that exterior doors be solidcore and include a method to protect the door's susceptibility to door edge splitting.



All exterior doors should be 1 ¾ inches thick. Steeldoors should be a minimum of 24 gauge. Regardless of their type, most residential doors have wood-framed edges, which need to be protected to prevent splitting at the deadbolt. To counter door splitting during an attack, the door should be equipped with an escutcheon plate, or door "reinforcer." Escutcheon plates are found in most hardware stores and are easy to install. An escutcheon plate significantly increases the rigidity of the door edge and reduces the chance of the door splitting around the deadbolt area. Some steel-edge doors are adequately protected without an escutcheon plate.

THE DOOR FRAME

The door frame is often referred to as the door jamb, which is inherently weak. In most cases, the doorframe is the weakest component of the door assembly. Door frames are usually constructed of soft wood and offer little or no resistance to splitting. The most important point of any door security system is the place where the deadbolt lock meets the frame.

This is the point "*where the rubber meets the road.*"

Adequately anchoring the strike plate to the wall structure of the house is critical. A strike plate is a piece of metal, usually brass or steel, that attaches to the door frame and receives the lock bolt. Standard strike plates are secured with two screws, which offer little or no protection against door-frame failure. It is recommended that all exterior door frames be fitted with high-security strike plates. Available in a variety of designs, high-security strike plates utilize four or six offset screws and are usually constructed of heavy-gauge brass or steel. It is further recommended the strike plate be secured with at least 3-inch screws with a hardwood filler (blocker) inserted between the door jamb and wall structure (studs). The hardwood filler should extend a minimum of 12-inches above and below the strike plate. Commercially-made security products consisting of aluminum plates that install behind the door frame are available which can substitute for a hardwood filler. This type of reinforcement method has proven to be very effective while maintaining aesthetics. For an added measure of security, it is recommended that all door hinges be anchored with at least 3-inch screws and shimmed. While less likely an occurrence, the possibility exists a burglar could attack the door from its hinged side.

Prevalent in residential subdivisions are entryways with side lights (pictured below, left) on one or both sides of the exterior door. While these types of doors are aesthetically pleasing, without proper security, they offer very little protection. The Oakland Park KS Crime Prevention Unit, working in cooperation with their area homebuilders, tested a product which reinforces door frames for side-light units. A "jamb brace" can be installed in an existing door frame, or ordered with new doors from local millwork companies. The application of an impact-resistant material, such as security film, may be considered. Security film has limitations, so it is critical to install such products to manufacturer's specifications. A superior glazing product is laminated glass. Laminated glass is the type of glass used in automobile windshields. It offers resistance to penetration other glass products do not possess.



The snap on cover conceals the "retro-fit" security product from view (right)

THE DEADBOLT

When choosing a deadbolt, it is important it have the following minimum specifications:

- *Minimum 1/4 inch interlocking carriage bolts to hold the cylinder halves together.*
- *Tapered cylinder guard.*
- *Hardened steel bolt with a 1-inch throw.*
- *Bolt encased in a single piece housing.*
- *Bolt constructed to limit internal movement or "play" when bolt is fully extended*

Not all deadbolts are created equal. They appear similar on the exterior, but the internal components are critical to the overall integrity of the lock. Inquire and ensure the deadbolt meets or exceeds ANSI grade 2 testing standards.

PATIO DOOR (SLIDING DOOR)

Common on both old and new homes are patio or sliding doors. While patio doors contain a large glass area, breaking glass is one of the least desirable ways for a burglar to gain entry. The amount of noise involved in breaking the glass, and the potential for suffering an injury, ensures most burglars will look for an easier and safer mode of entry. Measures should still be enacted to protect the glass area against breakage. Patio doors can also be defeated by prying the lock, sliding the door open, or by lifting the door out of its track. Fortunately, both of these types of attacks can be prevented. To prevent forcing the door open, a secondary-locking device reinforcing the door lock should be used. Examples include pins or "Charlie bars." Available at most hardware stores, these devices are inexpensive and easily installed. To prevent the patio door from being lifted out, it is recommended a homeowner use evenly spaced screws inserted in the upper slide track. The head of the screws should protrude just enough to allow free movement of the door, but prevent the door from being lifted out of its track.

WINDOWS AND GLASS

Very few of all residential burglars enter through windows. Very few windows are manufactured with security as the main consideration. Most windows are designed for aesthetics and energy efficiency. Basement windows are extremely vulnerable and offer virtually no resistance to forced entry. The typical basement window is held in place by two spring-latches. These windows are typically constructed poorly and offer inadequate locking devices. Basement-window security can be improved with installation of security bars or glass blocks. While increasing the security of the residence, bars and glass blocks can restrict occupants from escaping the residence during a house fire. This should be considered prior to installing bars or blocks Single or double-hung windows are difficult to secure. Casement windows offer a better form of security. When considering window replacement or during



construction of a new home, ask whether the window unit meets or exceeds the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) F 588-97. Windows meeting or exceeding this standard have been tested for their ability to resist forced-entry attacks. Window units meeting the ASTM standard are an improvement from the typical builders-grade window unit and are more costly. Laminated glass (pictured above) should also be considered to enhance the overall security of window units. Laminated glass consists of two panes of glass with a tough plastic interlayer that makes forced entry extremely difficult. The glass may crack, but it will take several blows for a burglar to penetrate it. This type of window will not sacrifice aesthetics to enhance the overall security of the home. The ability to exit of the house in the event of fire is not compromised for security purposes, because building codes mandate windows open from the inside. Having to break glass to facilitate escapes during fires is not recommended.

LIGHTING

Lighting can serve as an effective deterrent to burglars. Lighting is often the most prescribed, yet misunderstood security recommendation. In general, a residence will benefit from leaving the lights on during hours of darkness. Lighting assists the police with identification of street addresses and provides the entire neighborhood a more secure feeling. The sides and rear of the home are different. Motion-sensitive lighting is preferred for several reasons:

- ⌚ It increases the potential for witnesses by suddenly illuminating the environment. The human eye is naturally attracted to light.
- ⌚ It saves on light-bulb maintenance costs, because lights are activated only when motion is detected, and they cycle off when activity ceases.
- ⌚ It may create a "fight or flight" response in the perpetrator. Burglary research conducted by criminologists list motion activated-lighting as a significant deterrent to burglars who committed their crimes at night.

OCCUPANCY

The single greatest deterrent for most burglars is occupancy. Creating the "illusion of occupancy" may be more difficult than it sounds. The FBI's Uniformed Crime Reports (UCR), indicate over 50% of all residential burglaries occur during the day. Lights and televisions on timers have limitations. Another interesting fact which the researchers point out is the method by which burglars check homes for occupancy; ringing the doorbell or knocking. The best defense against these tactics is an active Neighborhood Watch program.

For more information on Residential Security contact the Menasha Police Department 967-3500 or the Crime Reduction Coordinator Cctqp\ go rmem at azemlock@ci.menasha.wi.us