



Burglary Prevention

Burglary is a non-confrontational property crime that occurs when residents are not home. Most burglaries in Tucson are committed by low-to medium-skilled burglars. They use tools like rocks, screwdrivers, channel lock pliers, etc., to gain entry. **Their targets are often selected at random, based on their perceived opportunity to successfully commit the crime.** Due to the inadequate security of many premises, these relatively unskilled people can gain entry in 4 to 45 seconds.

Burglars most often look for items that are small, valuable and can be quickly and easily converted into cash. Favorite items are cash, jewelry and watches, guns, laptop computers, VCRs and videotapes, CDs and CD players, DVDs and DVD players, and other small electronic devices. Most often, burglars use some amount of force to enter a residence, but they prefer easier access through an open window or door.

One of the most important things you can do to prevent a burglary is to "harden the target."

INSIDE THE HOME

- Use a secondary locking device on all windows.
- Use secondary locking devices on sliding glass doors.
- Use solid core or metal doors for all entrance points into your home. (This includes the entrance door from inside of the garage.)
- Use a quality, heavy-duty, deadbolt lock with a throw bolt of at least one inch.
- Use a four-screw, heavy-duty strike plate with 3-inch screws to penetrate into the doorframe stud.
- Use 1-inch screws in the door hinges.
- **Lock your doors and windows! It does you no service to invest in and install good hardware in your home if you fail to use it.** Never leave your home unlocked, even if you are only going to be away a short time.

AROUND THE HOME

- Trim shrubbery from around your windows and doors. Windows and doors should be clearly visible to neighbors and the street. Trees should be trimmed so that no branches are below 6 feet on the trunk. Bushes should be trimmed below windowsill level so no one can hide behind them while tampering with the window or looking in.
- Plants such as thorny cacti, pyracantha, and acacia bushes or trees all provide natural security barriers when planted along your property lines and underneath windows.
- Front and rear house numbers should be 4-5 inches high and should be clearly visible from the street. When possible, they should be lighted or reflective and located near the street, facing both directions.

KNOW YOUR NEIGHBORS

- Get to know your neighbors. Communicate with them often and establish trust with them.
- Agree to watch out for each other's home.
- Neighbors who know your habits and life practices are more easily able to recognize suspicious activity at your home and more willing to report it to police during your absence.
- If you have a spare key to your home, consider asking a trusted neighbor to hold it for you. This is a more desirable arrangement than leaving it hidden in planter boxes, under doormats or above ledges. Experienced burglars know to look for hidden keys in these places.
- Consider organizing a Neighborhood Watch program in your neighborhood.

LIGHTING

- Your parking area should be well lit. Good lighting helps you identify potential threats and suspicious activity around your home and vehicles. It needs to be bright enough to minimize dark areas, but not so bright as to blind you when you might need to see most. Consider motion detector and "dusk to dawn" or photocell fixtures as components of your lighting design in the parking area of your home.
- Minimize dark areas between well-lit ones. Burglars hide in shadows and use the "path" of darkness as their route.
- The entryway to your home should also be well lit during the night, but turned off during the day. Leaving a porch or garage light on all day is a giveaway to burglars that you are away from home. "Dusk to dawn" or photocell fixtures are ideal here.
- Consider using motion detector lights for large yards and areas such as a side yard that are hidden from view but provide a place to hide.

MISCELLANEOUS

- Lock the gates around your home. An open gate is like an invitation to a criminal. Although locking a gate doesn't prevent someone from jumping the gate or fence, it does make them appear much more suspicious, and your neighbors are more likely to call police to report such activity. It is also harder to carry large items over the fence, and it takes more time.
- Alarm systems are not always necessary, and are usually recommended based on the individual crime risk of your residence, for example, if you have expensive jewelry, or a gun collection. If you choose to get one, remember that alarm systems need to be properly installed and maintained. Be sure you understand how your system is monitored and what services you are receiving.
- Most people are not aware that their homeowners insurance does not cover, or is limited in covering, jewelry, guns, computers and other specialty items. Check with your company to verify what your coverage is.
- Consider using "Beware" stickers and signs. If you have a dog or an alarm system, put up signs that say so. They deter criminals. Consider putting up signs even if you have no additional protection. It still acts as a deterrent.
- Make a home inventory list of your valuable items including make, model, serial number and any other identifiers. You may even consider photographing or videotaping your valuables. Store this inventory away from your home.