

Home Security for Victims of Crime

The following guidelines are designed to help you consider useful strategies to enhance your personal safety and security while at home.

While none of these strategies can guarantee your safety, they can – as a whole – make your home and yard more secure.

Creating a “Safety Net”:

- ✓ Do *not* be afraid to ask for help if you have safety concerns. Our law enforcement and social service systems – as well as those who are close to you – will be glad you came to them for assistance and support!
- ✓ If possible and if you are comfortable, inform trusted family members, neighbors, co-workers, friends or clergy members (and if you have children, their schools) about any concerns you may have about your personal safety and security (or that of your loved ones) -- at home, at work, or in other locations that you frequent in your daily activities.
- ✓ Partner with law enforcement, and clearly identify any safety concerns or issues you may have. Provide your locations and contact information for access 24-hours-a-day, seven days a week.
- ✓ Ask your local law enforcement agency to conduct a “security check” of your home to identify any recommendations for improvement.
- ✓ Carefully document any reasons for safety concerns, i.e., direct or indirect threats, information received from trusted sources, items left at your home or workplace to intimidate you, etc. Such documentation can be used as evidence to initiate action by law enforcement and criminal justice officials.
- ✓ Join your Neighborhood Watch Program, and provide these safety guidelines to its members.
- ✓ Develop a “safety kit” that includes key telephone numbers for emergencies, a cellular telephone that is always readily available and fully charged, a flashlight, important papers (such as birth certificates and insurance information), cash for expenses that might arise, and medicine or prescriptions.

Some Basic Security Tips for Your Home:

- ✓ Assess possible points of entry:
 - Strong, sturdy doors at all points of entry.

- Key locks.
 - Deadbolt locks.
 - Metal burglar bars to cover doors and windows on the ground floor.
- ✓ Purchase an alarm system.
 - ✓ Keys should be made available only to trusted family members, friends and colleagues:
 - ✓ All locks should be re-keyed if they are lost or stolen, or if there are concerns about who has possession and possible access.
 - ✓ Keys within the home or work environment should be kept out of sight in a safe and secure place.
 - ✓ Access keys are *never* left outside (even for trusted family members and friends).

Windows and Doors:

- ✓ If doors have a see-through window, a curtain or blind is placed over it.
- ✓ Drapes or blinds are included in all windows to obstruct possible view.
- ✓ Peepholes in doors can help identify all visitors.

Other Entries:

- ✓ Possible garage entries are secure.
- ✓ An electronic garage door opener should be used, if possible, and the remote access device should *never* be left in sight within a vehicle.

Landscaping and Lighting:

- ✓ No foliage is large enough to conceal a person who is crouching or standing.
- ✓ Lighting covers the complete footage of the front and back yards.
- ✓ Motion detectors are available to shine light on any movement.
- ✓ Timers are utilized to turn on indoor lighting in the evening and at night.
- ✓ Identification of security systems is prominently posted.
- ✓ “Beware of dog” signage (regardless if you have one) is also helpful.

Mail and Deliveries:

- ✓ Avoid any visual documentation of the identify of the person(s) who occupy(s) the home.
- ✓ Place a “mail stop” with the U.S. Postal Service when you will be absent for a period of time.
- ✓ Place a “stop delivery” request for newspapers or other local deliveries when you will be absent for a period of time.
- ✓ *Never* leave mail to be delivered in your home mailbox or delivery slot. Take it to the Post Office or a U.S. Postal mailbox for delivery.

Electronic Communications:

- ✓ If possible, have access to both a land line telephone *and* cellular telephone.
- ✓ If possible, obtain “caller identification” technology that indicates the source of telephone calls made to your home.
- ✓ Never leave a message that indicates your location or possible absence, either through a telephone answering machine or e-mail technology.
- ✓ Record a message that says “we are not available at the moment,” even if you live alone.
- ✓ If you have a dog, have it bark in the background while recording your message.
- ✓ If possible, have a male family member/friend/colleague record your answering machine message (for female victims).

Written by Anne Seymour, Senior Advisor, Justice Solutions. (2004) Justice Solutions: Washington, D.C.