

# Public Safety Experts: A Look at Home Security

## ADVICE FROM SOME OF THE LEADERS IN THE BUSINESS



Steve Albrecht

“ I would say the biggest mistake I see when homeowners install home security systems is that fuzzy, blurry, grainy shots that can't help the cops identify the face clearly are useless. ”



Sarah Leary

“ Start by building a safer neighborhood by connecting neighbors to one another so they can share timely information and protect themselves. ”



Adam Justice

“ Don't allow strangers inside your home. ”



Timothy Dahl

“ You not only want to choose a system that fits your budget and has the devices you need most, but you also need to consider costs for upgrading your system and if they have enough products to fit your future needs as most people end up expanding on their current system if they are happy with it. ”



David Nance

“ More than 50% of home invasions are occurring through first floor entry points. Additionally, if you're investing in an alarm system, test it to ensure all sensors are working, and you have the proper batteries for each device – and change them as needed. ”



Keith Brandon

“ Consider your current lifestyle and the needs of your family when choosing any home security system. For example, do you travel often? Do you have children that arrive home from school while you are away? Do you have service personnel that need access to the home at predetermined times? ”

## Key Considerations for Securing Your Home

Home security is an important topic to address because burglaries happen on a regular basis due to neglect from homeowners and renters. To prevent break-ins, people have to become familiar with ways on protecting their homes and be aware of the [tips](#) on how to deal and report a crime to the police if they get in such a situation. In this guide, we will extensively cover different tips on preventing property crime. By controlling access, providing visibility, and maintaining your property, you are not only protecting your belongings and home, but also yourself and your family. Unfortunately, burglaries are not the only things that pose danger to a home. Properties are also subject to fires. More often than not, they are caused by cooking or plain neglect and lack of responsibility. Taking active measures to keep your home safe from fires is important, as is having emergency contact(s) available in the event something unfortunate occurs.

This guide is designed to provide you with knowledge and tips on how you can enhance the security of your home and property.

# Understanding the Mind of a Burglar

Let's take a look at how these thieves' minds work...



In short, they are criminals of opportunity. They generally target homes they know they can easily access without getting caught. With that said, they try to find homes where they can easily get in and out as quickly as possible. The reason for this is because the longer it takes a burglar to get in, the more time it gives for someone to notice and call the police.

Surprisingly and unfortunately, many residents make it extremely easy for burglars to enter their homes. Whether it be an unlocked door or garage, burglars can make their way in and take whatever they want and be out the door in a jiffy. Sure, it is possible to pick a lock, but it would take much more time to do so than just walking through an unlocked door. By making sure all of your doors, windows, and garage are locked at all times (especially when you are going out), you add a buffer of time for neighborhood watchers to call the cops if there is someone trying to enter without permission. Often times, burglars may also be discouraged by how much trouble they have to put into entering a securely locked home, so they will move onto the next one.



In addition to time, burglars are also discouraged by sound. Barking dogs and home security alarms, for example, will bring unwanted attention to a criminal. They want to essentially be in "ninja mode" when they are committing their crimes, so any homes with these features will be avoided at most costs. Instead, burglars are likely to just move on to the next home that stays quiet, allowing them to enter and leave without disruption.



Burglars and criminals tend to frequent darker areas because it means they will less likely get caught. With that said, homes with a lot of trees blocking the main entrance and are poorly lit at night are perfect targets because thieves can simply run and hide somewhere in case they get caught and need to hide. To fix this, residents should keep their bushes trimmed, grass cut regularly, and their homes well-lit at night. A great idea is having a light sensor that will go off when someone gets near or on the property. Once the light automatically turns on, burglars are likely to run away before they get caught in the act.

Time, sound, and visibility are the three main factors that need to be considered when trying to prevent theft from a home. Some questions you might want to ask yourself include:

- Are my doors locked (and double locked if possible) at the main entrance?
- Are my other doors locked from access?
- Are my windows shut all the way?
- Is my property well-lit at night?
- Can I see any of my valuables from outside on the street?
- Are there areas in my neighborhood that could offer cover or leverage for a criminal to break in easily?
- Does my routine at home make it easy for a thief to know when is the best time to try and enter?

### "MIND OF A BURGLAR" RESOURCES:

Interested in learning more about burglars, what they do, and why they do what they do? Check out the following resources for additional insight:

- [The Atlantic](#) - Read into what the mind of a burglar is like and how burglaries are executed.
- [BBC.com](#) - This article sheds light on typical burglar's behaviors and what you need to know about them.
- [WTHR](#) - Get an inside look at the mind of a criminal, and get a better idea of what you need to do to prevent home burglaries.

## What are some things I can do to prevent burglaries?

Thieves are always looking out for themselves, so it is crucial to do the same and be ruthless in protecting your own home, self, and family from any dangerous or unwanted situation. By staying aware and actively playing on the safe side, you will shoo off the bad guys. Here are some measures you can take to prevent burglaries.



## Get a dog.

Dogs will often bark when they sense unfamiliar people coming to your doorstep, warding off potential criminals.

## Always complete a background check & ask for references on new contractors.

After workers leave, be sure to go through your valuables and make sure everything is still there.



## Be smart about who you let into your home.



Sometimes, even your gardener or maid might have ulterior motives and can't be trusted. With that said, it's crucial to keep a close eye on people you hire to work in your home, and keep your valuables secured somewhere out of reach. Keep in mind that anytime you let someone into your home, you are essentially giving them an opportunity to steal, scope out your valuables, and/or make plans to come back at another time to take your belongings that they've been eyeing.

## Always complete a background check & ask for references on new contractors.

After workers leave, be sure to go through your valuables and make sure everything is still there.



## Install a home security/alarm system.

A home security camera will be a great thing to have because it will essentially keep tabs on people, and help you keep an eye on unwanted visitors and behavior. If getting a dog is not practical for you, then installing an alarm system is a must.



## Get to know your neighbors.

A great way to ward off unwanted visitors and potential burglars is to get friendly with your neighbors so that everyone can help each other out. This is especially helpful when/if you go on vacation for an extended period of time and need someone to help you keep a closer eye. Burglars are a lot less likely to go through with their criminal activity if they think they might be watched.

## Make sure your doors and windows are locked.

This step is the easiest way to keep burglars and unwanted visitors out of your home. Easy access will invite bad news and people.



## Don't accept unsolicited help.

Unless you call someone to come over and perform a service, don't let them in. Many thieves are con artists who put on a front, making themselves look like a plumber, painter, tree trimmer, etc. They will often come with one other person. One may lure you outside to talk about the service they are "offering", while the other may run into your house to go through your belongings while you are kept distracted and busy.

## Install lights outside your doorstep area so that your home is well-lit at night.

Thieves will frequent dark areas because it's harder for them to run away and not get caught if there is plenty of light. With that said, having light around your home at night will keep your area well-lit and more likely clear of criminals.



## Be careful with what you throw in the trash.



Some criminals will go through your trash to see what you've left behind. For example, if you recently bought an expensive TV and are throwing out the packaging, a criminal who sees that might use that as a clue and incentive to come back and find a way to get the TV. If you're trying to get rid of trash from any significant purchases, make sure to cut up the packaging and make it as inconspicuous as possible.



## Keep your home well-kept.

By trimming your bushes and eliminating potential "hiding spots", thieves are a lot less likely to show up and try to steal from your home. Keeping your place well-kept also signifies that the home is lived in and that you're not away on vacation for an extended period of time.

## BURGLARY PREVENTION RESOURCES:

You can never be too cautious when it comes to protecting your home, family, and yourself from an unwanted burglary. With that said, here are some resourceful websites providing additional information:

- [San Jose Police Department](#) - This guide by the SJPD is very comprehensive and even includes a video.
- [Crime Doctor](#) - Read up on some additional tips on how you can prevent burglaries here.
- [Reader's Digest](#) - Ever wondering what a burglar is thinking but won't tell you? Find out here!

## Identifying & Maintaining Your Home

In addition to being aware of the general tips to keeping your home safe from criminal activity, it is also important to be able to identify and maintain your home. To do this, you will want to:

Write your driver's license number somewhere on any valuables that might be stolen so that they can be identified.

Take detailed pictures of items that you can't write on.

Make sure that you keep an updated record of your valuables. This record might include model, type, serial number, fair market value, and proof of purchase, to name a few.

Replace broken windows, locks, and doors when needed.

Fix broken fences and locks when needed.

Keep loose rocks away from the property to avoid vandalism and break-ins.

Keep your home in good condition: mow the lawn, rake the leaves, clean the litter, etc. to indicate that your home is lived in and not being neglected.

Make sure that your street address number is clearly visible from the street so that cops can find your home easily as needed.

### SECURING YOUR HOME RESOURCES:

- [Insurance Information Institute](#) - Are you doing enough to maintain your home and make sure it's not an easy target for crime? Find out here.
- [Safe Bee](#) - Learn more about how you can reduce property theft using this user-friendly guide.
- [Home Advisor](#) - Find out how you can safeguard your home from criminal activity not only from the inside, but from the outside as well.

## How Can I Keep My Home Safe While on Vacation?

Before going on vacation, it is important that everything in your home is in working condition. This includes your locks, security cameras, alarms, and doors. Prior to leaving, you should also do the following to ensure that you have a relaxing vacation and come back to a safe home.



1

Inform your neighbors so that they can keep an eye on your property.

2

Set a timer for lights to go on and off at times you're normally home and at night time it so that your home looks occupied.

3

Make sure all light bulbs are working properly.

4

Make sure all windows are closed completely and locked. Double lock the door(s).

5

Make sure your garage door is shut all the way before driving away.

6

Maintain your front yard and lawn prior to leaving to make sure it's as clean-cut as possible (and will stay that way during your vacation).

7

Leave a contact number with a neighbor so that they can contact you easily in case of emergency.

8

Set your burglar alarm and notify your alarm company to let them know that you will be away.

9

Make sure your alarms and lights are tamper-proof.

10

Refrain from announcing your vacation plans publicly on social media for any potential burglars to see.

11

Temporarily stop mail, have them delivered somewhere else, or ask a neighbor to pick up any mail that you receive.

12

Keep all valuables locked up in a stationed safe.



## "WHILE YOU'RE AWAY" RESOURCES:

Looking for more ways to keep your home safe while you are out enjoying yourself for an extended period of time? Consider reviewing the following resources:

- [Independent Traveler](#) - Get some tips on how to protect yourself and your home while you are away.
- [Wikihow](#) - How to protect your home while you're away (with pictures).
- [New York Times](#) - Great advice to make sure you are aware of and practice these tips before you step out the door for your vacation.

## What Do I Do In the Event I Get Robbed?

Have a list and photos of your valuables on hand and ready to report. If you come home and the door is unlocked or open, and things look like they're out of place, leave everything as is and call the police right away. Never confront a burglar to stay on the safe side, but if you spot him/her, be sure to take a good look at what they're wearing, what they look like, and what they have taken out of the house.

## Home Security Technology

Keeping your home safe is a lot easier now than before thanks to advanced technology. For example, remote monitoring cameras allow you to view activity in the home from work, vacation, or virtually anywhere outside of the home, on your phone. Even if you are miles away from home, you can still see in real-time what is going on in your home. Many [security systems](#) nowadays also allow you to arm and disarm them remotely. This means that even if you forget to arm the house before you left, you can still do so from your phone. In addition to remote monitoring, smart locks also exist to automatically lock doors once they sense that you have left the home, using bluetooth on your phone. Home sensors are great for detecting motion. When armed, motion triggers will be sent to your mobile device. This way, you will be immediately notified if someone is trying to break into your house. Of course, the types of technology are endless, but these are a few common ones found in many homes today.

## HOME SECURITY TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES:

- [Electronic House](#) - Are you naturally a DIY person? You'll want to check this article out to learn more about the must-have devices for a DIY home security system. (You can also see our [best DYI Security Systems](#) page)
- [CNET](#) - some of the latest home security gadgets from CES 2016
- [Huffington Post](#) - Learn how technology has immensely changed how we protect our property today.

### Creating a Home Fire Defense Plan

In addition to warding off burglars from your home, it's also important that you have a home fire defense plan so that you and your family stay safe from any fires that might take place in the home. Some simple but essential steps to take include:

- **Install smoke detectors in every room, and test them regularly to make sure that they work.**
- **Have a monitored fire alarm system installed so that firefighters can be alerted in case of emergency right away.**
- **Have a clear escape plan should a fire take place.**
- **Keep belongings away from any heaters.**
- **Don't leave stoves, toasters, and ovens unattended.**
- **Have your local fire station's contact information readily available in case you need to reach them.**
- **Have fire extinguishers available for use in case of emergency.**
- **Practice fire drills at home to make sure all residents know how to react and where to go in case of a fire.**
- **Make sure all stoves and ovens are turned off before leaving the house.**
- **Keep kitchen clean and clear of clutter, especially near the stove.**
- **Blow out candles when not in use.**

### Conclusion

There are so many different ways to ensure [home security](#). Some are common sense, everyday practices that we already do, while other techniques require more planning and awareness. Either way, this guide is designed to educate homeowners to take extra precautions to protect their homes. By being aware of all the different types of home security technologies out there and knowing how to create a home fire defense plan, for example, one will be ahead of the game in terms of protecting him or herself from potential danger -- whether it be as a result of a burglar or a house fire. Taking measures for home security may feel like a lot of work and may cost you a bit initially, but is well worth it to ensure safety and to prevent unnecessary stress later down the line. After all, a safe home is a happy home!