

Crescenta Valley Sheriff's Station Home Burglary Prevention Tips

(818)248-3464

www.lasd.org

Home Security

Burglary is mostly a crime of opportunity. This document contains tips on preventing home burglaries, vandalism, and other property crimes by controlling access, providing visibility, and maintaining your property. It also contains tips on protecting your home and property when you are away. These tips can significantly enhance the security of your home and property.

According to statistics, a large amount of property theft and residential burglaries occur because a garage door is left open and unattended. Please help your neighborhood and Crescenta Valley Sheriff's Station by closing your garage door when unattended.

Controlling Access

The following tips suggest how access to your home, apartment, or condo can be controlled by physical protection, deterrent measures, burglar alarms, and various security procedures.

Physical Protection Measures

- Install single cylinder dead-bolt locks on all exterior doors. Bolts should have a minimum throw of 1 inch. Strike plates should have screws that are at least 3 inches long. Doors should be solid hardwood or metal clad. Hinges should be located on the inside or have non-removable pins. Special locks are needed on double doors.
- Install additional locking devices on all sliding glass doors and windows.
- Chain locks are only good for privacy, not security.
- Re-key or change all locks when moving into a new home.
- Install locks on gates, garages, sheds, etc.
- Contact a locksmith or hardware store for advice on locks.
- Reinforce the glass in windows on the lock sides of doors so a burglar cannot break them and reach in to open the door.
- Install a good side-yard gate and keep it locked at all times. Side and back entries are the most common access points for burglars.
- Plant bushes with thorns or prickly leaves near windows and along fences.
- Trim trees so that limbs don't provide access to roofs, second stories, etc.

Deterrent Measures

- Attach Neighborhood Watch and/or Alarm Company stickers on or near entry doors and windows.
- Consider having a dog that can scare a stranger away by either barking or looking fierce. Keep an outside dog in a fenced area and have a good lock on the gate.
- Use fencing, gates, landscaping, pavement treatment, signs, etc. to define clear boundaries between your property and adjoining properties.

Consider Installing a Home Alarm System That Provides 24/7 Monitoring

- Alarm systems usually include one or more of the following components: Magnetic contacts on doors and windows, heat or motion detectors in interior spaces, glass break detectors, keypads with a means of checking the status of the system, and audible alarms.
- Get alarm company references from friends or neighbors. If your system is monitored, make sure the monitoring station is open 24/7 and has backup power. The company's customer service department should also be open 24/7.
- Inform your insurance company. You may qualify for a discount.
- The system should also have a fail-safe battery backup. Check the batteries periodically and replace them if necessary.

Security Procedures

- Keep all doors and windows locked, even if you are just going out "for a minute." If a window is left open a few inches for ventilation, pins or dowels should be inserted in the tracks to prevent someone from opening it more.
- Lock gates, garages, and sheds after each use.
- Store bicycles, mowers, etc. in a locked garage or shed, or secure them to some stationary point.
- Don't leave notes on your door when you are away from home.
- Don't leave keys in mailboxes or planters, under doormats, or in other obvious hiding spots. Leave an extra key with a neighbor.
- Don't leave ladders outside and available to burglars who may use them to avoid alarm systems by entering 2nd story windows.
- Learn to recognize who belongs in your neighborhood, development, or apartment, i.e., residents, workers, guests, etc.
- Know who is at your door before opening it.
- Ask for photo identification before letting in anyone you don't know. Check out the identification with the company or agency if you are suspicious.
- Never let a stranger enter your home to use the telephone. Offer to make the call yourself in an emergency.
- Don't give your name, phone number, or whereabouts on your answering machine message. Never say you aren't home. Just ask the caller to leave a message.

- Don't leave your home keys on a chain with your vehicle keys when you use valet parking. Also, don't leave your garage door opener where it is easily accessible. Keep your vehicle registration, proof of insurance, and any other papers with your home address on them where a criminal is not likely to find them.
- Call Crescenta Valley Station at (818)248-3464, if you are at home and hear or see something suspicious, **in an emergency call 911.**
- Don't go in or call out if you return home and suspect someone has broken into your home, call the police immediately.
- Don't discuss your assets or finances with strangers.
- Don't keep large sums of money at home.
- Keep valuable papers, stocks, bonds, expensive jewelry, coin collections, etc. in a bank safe deposit box. Don't store them at home unless you have a security closet or a safe that is well hidden and bolted securely to structure.

Providing Visibility

- Leave outside lights on after dark or have outside lights controlled by a motion sensor. Make sure there are no dark areas around the house, garage, or yard in which a person could hide. Street lights are generally inadequate for illuminating your property.
- Check lights regularly and replace burnt out bulbs.
- Trim bushes to eliminate possible hiding places, especially near windows and sidewalks.
- Install a wide-angle peephole in your front door so you can look out without being seen.

Maintaining Your Property

- Keep property in good condition and free of trash, litter, weeds, leaves, graffiti, dismantled or inoperative vehicles, and other things that indicate neglect in caring for your property.
- Repair / replace broken windows, screens, fences and gate locks.
- Use screens, wired glass, or other protection for light fixtures and bulbs.
- Remove loose rocks and other objects that could be used to vandalize or burglarize your property.

Protecting Your Home and Property When You Are Away

- Use timers on lights, radios, TVs, etc. to make them go on and off during the day and night to make your home appear occupied.
- Stop mail and newspaper delivery, or have neighbor pick up anything left at the home.
- Keep grass watered and cut. Water and trim other landscaping.
- Ask the neighbors to watch your home and report any suspicious activities.
- Leave your itinerary with a neighbor so you can be contacted in an emergency.
- Disconnect your electric garage door opener and padlock the door, preferably on the inside.
- Activate your burglar alarm and notify your alarm company that you will be away. Then if an alarm occurs when you are away the company will not call your home first to verify the alarm; it will notify the police directly. Also provide the alarm company with an up-to-date list of persons to contact about the alarm and the need to secure your home after a burglary.

Make Sure Deputies Can Find Your Residence

- Make sure your street address number is clearly visible from the street and is well lighted at night so the police and other emergency personnel can locate your home easily.
- Make sure your unit number (in a multifamily housing development) is clearly visible from paths in the development. A directory or map that shows paths and unit locations should be placed at the main entrance of the development.
- Provide Crescenta Valley Station with an entry code if you live in a gated community.

Identifying Your Property

- Etch or engrave your driver's license or other identification number on any valuables that might be stolen.
- Photograph valuables that cannot be etched.
- Keep a detailed, up-to-date record of your valuables. Include type, model, serial number, and value.

Vacation Security Checklist

Thieves look for "targets of opportunity." There are many things you can do to avoid becoming one of the victims, especially when you are going to be away from your home for an extended period.

- Notify Crescenta Valley Station (818)248-3464 and request "Vacation Patrol Checks" for your home while you are away.
- Double check second floor windows, areas which are often forgotten.
- Make sure that exterior areas will not give your absence away. Arrange to have mail and deliveries either stopped or picked up by a neighbor.
- Have outside lights turned on and off with a home timer. Arrange to have the lawn cut and the bushes trimmed.
- Have several timers attached to lights in various locations throughout the interior of your house. One timer can be programmed to turn one light on and off several times during the evening. Several timers performing the same function can give a very "lived-in" look to a home.
- This same practice with home timers can be utilized with TV's and radios, giving an added sound element to the "lived-in" look.
- Ask your neighbors to check your home regularly, and leave a number with them where you can be reached. Ask neighbors also to use your garbage cans. Ask neighbors to also pick up handbills or circulars.
- While it is advisable to notify Crescenta Valley Station and a neighbor of your planned absence, don't tell everyone about your plans. Don't leave notes on the door for neighbors, deliverymen, etc.
- If, upon returning from your trip, you spot evidence of a break-in, do not enter the house. Call Crescenta Valley Station (818)248-3464, **in an emergency call 911.**

Home Security Tips Dealing with Specific Type Doors, Locks, Hinges and Windows:

Doors

Exterior Doors - Many doors are made with hollow-core construction and poor locks. For the best protection you need solid doors and quality locks.

Sliding Doors - These doors are easily lifted out of their track. You can install a simple screw above the sliding door frame to prevent the door from being lifted out of the track. Drill a pilot hole in the top track above and slightly in from each corner of the sliding door frame section. Install a screw into each hole. Adjust the screw so that the head of the screw narrowly clears the frame, when the door is moved back and forth.

Double Doors - These doors are easily forced open. Flush lever bolts installed at the top and bottom of the doors are recommended.

Doors with Windows - Doors with glass windows require double key deadbolt locks so that the burglar cannot break the glass and reach in to manually unlock the door. The key to a double deadbolt should be left in the lock at all times, when someone is home to ensure easy exit in the event of fire or emergency. An alternate method of ensuring the key is accessible if you do not wish to keep it in the lock is to hang it on a string on the wall near the door, but out of reach and sight, should a burglar break the glass.

Garage Doors - Standard locks are easily pried and allows the burglar access to your home undetected. Cane bolts and hasps are excellent protection. Make sure that both sides of the garage door are secure so that someone cannot lift one end enough to crawl under. Any door from the garage into the house should be securely locked. The more barriers you provide, the better protected you are.

Locks and Hinges

Hinges - Many exterior doors expose the hinge pins on the outside. A burglar can remove the pins and lift the door from the frame. The best lock cannot guard against this technique. To prevent this, remove two opposing screws from each leaf of the hinge. Screw a long lag bolt into the frame side of the hinge leaf and saw off the head, leaving about 1/2 inch protruding. Drill out the opposite hole to allow the bolt to enter, when the door is closed. Do this to the top and bottom hinge plates. The hinge pins can still be removed by the burglar but the door will remain firmly in place.

Spring Latch - This latch offers little or no protection, since it can be forced open with a credit card or knife. A deadbolt in addition to the spring latch will offer more protection.

Deadbolt Locks - There are three basic types of deadbolts:

Deadbolts are only as good as the door and frame they are installed in.

1 - Single Cylinder Deadbolt - A solid bolt, activated by a key from the outside or a knob on the inside, which slides into the door frame. The lock cannot be slipped or easily pried.

2 - Double Cylinder Deadbolt - Basically the same as the single cylinder deadbolt except that it requires a key to be used from either side to function.

3 - Rim Lock - This lock has either horizontal or vertical deadbolts. It cannot be easily slipped, pried, or forced with a wrench. This lock, like all others, requires a strong mounting surface and hardware to be effective.

Padlocks - When buying a padlock do not economize. Low priced locks tend to be made from poor quality materials and are easily pried open or cut. Look for these features, when selecting a padlock:

1. Double locking shackle at the toe and heel
2. Hardened steel shackle, the larger the better
3. Five pin number
4. Key retaining feature (prevents removal of key when unlocked)
5. A strong steel hasp used with the padlock
6. Disc Padlock: Small shackle opening minimizes attacks by bolt cutters, saws, files, etc.

Windows

Sliding Windows - Sliding glass windows should be given the same security as sliding doors. Use the same supplementary locks or screws in the frame.

Crank Windows - These windows are easily secured. With the latch in a closed position, drill a small hole through the latch frame and handle. Insert a small metal pin through the hole to lock the window.

Double Hung Windows - An easy, inexpensive way to secure your window is to use the "pin" trick. Drill an angled hole through the top frame of the lower window partially into the frame of the upper window. Then insert the pin (a nail or eyebolt that is slightly smaller in diameter than the hole.) The window can't be opened until you remove the pin. Make a second set of holes with the windows partially open so you can have ventilation without inviting intruders.

Summary

All of the above prevention tips can help deter your property from being stolen. The most important part of prevention is reporting all suspicious activities to Crescenta Valley Station and becoming active in your Neighborhood Watch Program. To schedule a Neighborhood Watch Program meeting with your neighbors at your home, call Deputy Matejka or Sergeant Galbraith at (818)248-3464.

A continued and strong partnership between the community and law enforcement discourages thieves from coming to the Crescenta Valley area to commit crime.