



Richfield Police Crime Prevention Unit

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Improving Home Security

Securing your home doesn't have to be a chore — it can actually be fun if we take it in steps. Simple yet effective tips like securing your windows and doors, utilizing motion detector lighting, reaching out to neighbors and having a security plan can make a huge difference. Many residents are installing video doorbells and security cameras on the exterior of their homes now that they have become so affordable and easy to install. **If you have a security camera, be sure to register it at www.RichfieldMN.gov/SafeCam.**



1. Secure your doors

The door is the easiest point of entry for a thief, so it's vital you make sure your doors are secured. A hollow door, which burglars can kick in, is not as reliable as a solid-core door made of metal or wood. Make sure the door jamb — the part of the door frame to which the door is fastened — is securely attached to studs in the house frame. Close any wide gaps between the door and the door jamb. Such gaps could be used by a burglar to pry open a door and gain entry.

Deadbolt locks: The deadbolt lock has a bolt that must be activated by a key or thumb turn. It offers good security because it is not spring activated and cannot be opened with a credit card. Before we talk about deadbolt locks, however, we have to make sure we mention a heavy duty strike plate. A strike plate is the jamb fastening that receives the deadbolt in the locking position. A heavy duty strike plate uses four to six, three-inch screws, not two, three-fourth inch screws used in regular plates. The longer screws go through the frame into the jamb making it harder for someone to split the frame when kicking the door. **A heavy duty strike plate will strengthen the door jamb and reinforce the lock.**



A single cylinder deadbolt is activated with a key on the exterior side of the door and a thumb turn piece on the interior side. Install this lock where there is no breakable glass within 40-inches of the thumb turn piece. (Otherwise a burglar can break the glass, reach inside and turn the thumb piece.)

A double cylinder deadbolt is key activated on both sides on the door. It should be installed where there is glass within 40-inches of the lock. Double cylinder deadbolt locks can hinder escape from a burning home so always leave a key in or near the lock when someone is home. (Double cylinder deadbolt locks are only permitted in existing single-family homes, town homes and first floor duplexes used exclusively as residential dwellings.)

Both single and double cylinder deadbolt locks should meet these criteria to be a good security device:

- The bolt must extend a minimum of 1-inch and be made of case hardened steel.
- The cylinder guard must be tapered, round and free spinning to make it difficult to grip with a pliers or wrench. It must be solid metal – not hollow casting or stamped metal.
- There should be at least a five-pin tumbler system or equivalent locking device.
- The connecting screws that hold the lock together must be on the inside and made of case hardened steel. No exposed screw heads should be on the outside.
- The connecting screws must be at least one-fourth inch in diameter and go into solid metal stock, not screw posts.

2. Reinforce the windows

Burglars are always searching for “windows of opportunity.” First of all, make sure your windows are locked, and make a habit of locking them every time you leave and before you go to bed. However, a locked window won’t always do the trick — window latches are typically weak and don’t hold up against blunt force. Install window pin locks to keep windows partially open but still secure. Advanced pinless models are also available. Put up curtains over basement and garage windows. This provides privacy and keeps valuables out of sight. Plant prickly or thorny bushes beneath first-story windows. In extreme cases, install safety glass. This can work well for small windows that you don’t often open.



3. Secure your garage

The garage is another popular entry point for burglars because of the weakness of the door — it can be relatively easy for the latch to be jimmed open and the door lifted, punched or kicked in. If you have an attached garage and the interior door is unlocked, you're creating a more disastrous situation. Make sure you always keep the garage door down, install a deadbolt lock on both the garage service door and the interior door. USE THEM! Unplug the garage opener when you go on vacation.



4. Secure your Wi-Fi

It's easy to forget your WiFi needs security beyond your login password, but you can take a few steps to ensure your virtual world is as safe as your physical one. This is especially important if you have a “smart house” that relies on your smartphone and Internet connection. Set up a firewall. Give your home network an unintuitive name and complex password. Make sure your antivirus protection is up to date. Enable WPA2 for additional protection.

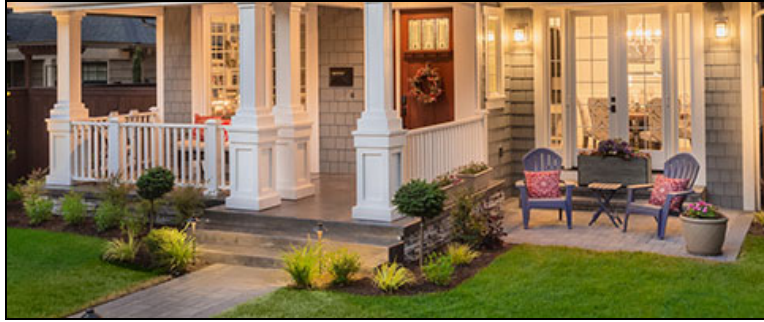
5. Secure the most common targets for burglars

Some common burglar targets include mailboxes, sheds and cars; but with a little bit of forward-thinking, you can thwart even the most experienced criminals. **Mailboxes:** Retrieve your mail ASAP. If you’re sending a check, mail it from the post office or pay bills online.

Sheds: A determined criminal can use a screwdriver to remove the screws from a shed door. With tamper-proof screws, you can foil their plans. **Cars:** We all know it - thieves love to break into cars. If possible, park your locked car in the garage. If you don’t have a garage, park as close to the house as possible in an area with a motion detector light.

DON'T LEAVE VALUABLES INSIDE. LOCK YOUR VEHICLE!





6. Landscaping: Keep your yard clean and bright

Trees and shrubbery: Should be trimmed 6-inches below windows and at least 3-feet away from doors.

Shrubbery such as rose bushes or other thorny varieties serve as a good deterrent to window peepers.

Fences: Privacy vs. chain link. Burglars prey on privacy. Fences that allow activity to be seen in your yard are preferable to “privacy” fences.

Motion detector lights are very effective in deterring crime. They also light up your driveway or entry doors when you are leaving or coming home.

Landscape lighting is low voltage lighting that can highlight your property line, light up your sidewalk and also light up the exterior of your windows – making your home a less attractive target to night time burglars.

Interior lighting: using light timers makes a home look occupied. Good lights to leave on are bedroom and/or bathroom lights. (Radios and televisions are also good items to have on timers. If a radio playing a talk station is heard from the outside of a home, it gives the appearance that a conversation is being carried on and someone is home. The perception of someone being home greatly reduces the possibility of a burglary.)

7. Out with the old locks, in with the new

If you're moving into a new home, it's vital you replace all the locks. Previous owners — plus their family, friends, and people who worked in the house on repairs — all might have copies of the keys. If you're a renter, you can ask the landlord if they've already replaced the locks. While you're at it, replace any low-quality locks with ones that can withstand picking or kicking.

8. Won't you be my neighbor?

Take a page from Mr. Rogers' book and get to know your neighbors (from a socially safe distance). Not only is it fun to make a few new friends, but you can also help each other keep an eye out for suspicious activity. You can even trade turns watching each other's homes while you're on vacation. Another positive is if you know everyone around you, it's far easier to notice a stranger in your neighborhood. Of course, this will be easier when masks are not required.



9. Keep thieves at bay while you're away

When you're on vacation, you have to be extra careful; however, it just takes a little bit of prep to make sure your home is ready for your absence. First, don't broadcast your vacation plans and photos on social media until after you return. Ask a trusted friend to bring in your mail (and newspaper). Make arrangements to have your driveway and sidewalk shoveled, if it's winter. If you're friendly with your neighbors, let them know you'll be gone so they can be a little more watchful than usual. Use timed lights to go on and off at regular intervals so it looks like somebody's home.