

SECTION 3: Crime Prevention Advice

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Reducing Vehicle Crime

Theft from motor vehicles is a crime we can all help to reduce. Vehicle Crime can cost us dearly in damage to the vehicle, a great deal of inconvenience and increased insurance premiums. Over half of all car crime is carried out by the opportunist thief, so don't give criminals an easy ride.

- Steering wheel and gear stick locks are not expensive and are easy to fit.
- Have the vehicle Registration Number etched onto all glass surfaces, including the head lamps.
- Satellite Navigation Systems are the most sought after items. Always remove the system, including the "sucker" marks left on the surface.
- To protect your wheels and tyres, fit locking wheel nuts.
- Consider marking all your valuables that you frequently take in your car. Keep a note of any serial numbers
- Remove the ignition key every time you leave your vehicle. Even when filling up with fuel or just popping into a shop. It only takes seconds for someone to get into your car and drive away.
- Lock all doors, close all windows and shut the sunroof every time you leave the vehicle unattended.
- If you do not have a garage, always try to park in a well lit, open location over looked by houses. Remove any items including clothing from the vehicle.
- Don't leave anything on display, even an old coat left on a seat can be a target for someone to smash and grab.

Residential Property Security

Most burglaries are carried out by opportunist thieves. In 2 out of 10 "break-ins" thieves do not have to use force - entry is made through an open door or insecure window. Reduce the risk of burglary happening by taking a few simple precautions.

Boundary/Perimeter

Start at the outside and walk around the whole of the perimeter.

- Check fences, gates, shrubbery and hedges. Look for possible hiding areas or easy ways of gaining entry.
- Check for good visibility from surrounding houses and roadways. Low boundaries at the front of the house give maximum visibility, but high walls or fences of 1.8m (6ft) provide good security at the rear.
- Side entrances should be secured with lockable gates. The height should match that of the rear fence so that any burglar attempting to climb or force the gate will be seen from the road or a nearby house.

Windows

A third of all burglaries are carried out through a window at the back of the house.

- Fit key operated window locks to all downstairs windows and easily accessible upstairs windows, especially those that cannot be seen from the street especially those above a flat

roof or next to drain pipe. Remove keys from locked windows and keep them out of sight, but make sure you know where they are in the event of a fire.

- A window lock means the thief will need to break the glass and risk attracting attention.
- Louvre windows are particularly vulnerable because the slats can be removed very easily. Fix the louvre in place with an epoxy resin glue and fit a special louvre lock.
- Fit laminated glass to vulnerable windows. It makes them extremely difficult to break or make a hole.
- Do not forget the garage windows. This is more important if the garage is attached to the house with an internal door leading to the inside of the house.

Doors

If your doors are not secure then neither is your house.

- Make sure the doors and frames are strong and in good condition, otherwise good locks are useless.
- Some lower door panels are fitted with thin timber materials that, if attacked offer little resistance. Consider replacement with good quality plywood panels.
- Fit back and front doors with a five lever mortice deadlock.
- Should the door not be thick enough to have a mortice dead lock, the night latch should be changed to a rim dead lock or a rim automatic dead lock.
- French windows and patio doors should be fitted top and bottom with security mortice bolts. If not already fitted add an anti lift device to the top channel of the doors.
- If you have an integral door to the garage, this should be of solid construction and locked with a five lever lock and two mortice bolts.
- Consider replacing glass panels with laminated glass.
- If the letter box is close to the locking mechanism fit an internal security letterbox flap.
- Do not forget door viewers and chains for personal security

Around The Home

When you leave the house even if it is only for short time, make sure that doors and windows are secure. It only takes seconds to steal your property.

- Do not leave keys in obvious places, burglars know where to look.
- Keep garage doors closed and locked.
- If you have a common alleyway, speak to your neighbour about sharing the cost of fitting a strong lockable gate across the entrance.

Lighting

Good lighting can deter a thief. Fit exterior lights to the front and rear of the house. Exterior security lights are not expensive. Preferred exterior lighting is 'dawn to dusk lighting' rather than lighting with infra red sensors.

Sheds

The first place that many burglars look is the shed because they are of light construction and are easily forced open. Sheds often contain tools, which can be used for breaking in to the main property.

- If you are unable to secure them with mortice locks, use padlocks or lockable bolts
- Keep expensive tools in the house, secure ladders with a strong chain and padlock.

Burglar Alarms

Visible burglar alarms make a thief think twice, noise attracts attention. There are many systems on the market, ranging from a DIY kit to sophisticated systems costing hundreds of pounds.

If you wish to have an expensive system installed, obtain several quotes from reputable installers, preferable those who are members NACOSS.

Property Marking

To assist in the prevention and detection of crime and the return of stolen property to the rightful owner, property should be marked by a method which is secure, visible and leads to the identity of the owner

Property marking is recommended because:

- It ensures that it can be returned to you if it has been recovered.
- The property becomes less valuable to a thief and is not so easy to dispose of.
- The risk for the person purchasing the property of being prosecuted for handling or receiving stolen goods is increased dramatically.
- The marking of property also has a strong deterrent effect, and its is advisable that you advertise that you have marked your property.
- It is often the case that property not positively identified as stolen is returned to the suspected thief.
- Property marking costs little and can bring peace of mind.

Most properties have items that are attractive to the opportunist thief. Cash, jewellery, portable TVs, computers etc. Some of these items can be concealed from view, so once inside the criminal will have to make time to search.

The Police Service does not test products and cannot recommend any particular company to members of the public. We can offer them a list of suppliers who provide similar products / services or direct them to a source and/or directory that lists such suppliers.

There are several ways to mark property depending on the type of object to be marked. The cost of the product has also to be considered.

- You should prepare an inventory of valuable items, including a description and their value. Colour photographs are useful and valuable for your own and police purposes.
- The most common methods of marking are:
 - Ultra Violet [UV] or Invisible Marking
 - A UV pen can put an invisible mark on your property, which can only be seen using UV light. The item is marked with a postcode followed by the house number or name of property. The mark will fade in time, especially when exposed to sunlight, and can be washed off so it needs renewing regularly.
 - Ceramic marking pens have been developed to mark china, glass or any glazed surface. They do not cut or scratch the surface but leave a permanent mark.

- UV pens and easy to use property marking kits can be bought reasonably cheaply from stationers and DIY stores. It is important that stickers are displayed to state that property has been marked
- The Immobilise Registration Scheme www.immobilise.com allows property to be marked electronically and has been endorsed by all 43 police forces. Immobilise is a free, web based national register which allows people to record details of their property on a secure database on the internet. Each individual has their own account and anything with a serial number can be registered. Additional items, photographs and certificates can also be downloaded. A free bulk upload service is available for business, public services and other organisations to enable them to register all their property very quickly and easily. Police officers can search Immobilise from any terminal with an internet connection. A second search engine also sits alongside the NMPR. This is called CheckMEND. CheckMEND can be used by both the public and second hand dealers to check items of property they wish to purchase and ensure that they are not handling stolen property.

There are also a number of commercial companies offering property marking and asset registration services. The Association of Chief Police Officers endorses, via its Secured by Design¹ scheme, property marking companies / products which satisfy their criteria. .Go to www.securedbydesign.com , click on licensed companies and then property identification

¹ Secured By Design is managed by ACPO Crime Prevention Initiatives Limited (ACPO CPI) a "not for profit" company wholly owned by ACPO. ACPO CPI also licenses companies to use the Secured By Design logo on those of their products which meet the attack test standards drawn up by bodies such as the British Standards Institute.

Uninvited Callers

We all wish to live our lives in safety, and we all have a right to feel safe in our own homes. These guidelines are designed to offer practical advice on dealing with bogus callers and rogue traders.

- Lock the doors when you go out, even if it is only for a few minutes. Lock up when you retire for the night, remove the key from the lock, but put the key where you can find it quickly in an emergency but do not leave it on view.
- There is no need to be embarrassed about refusing to let callers into your home and it is always sensible to take precautions. If unsure do not open the door.
- Fit a chain and use it every time you answer the door. Do not remove it until you are sure that the caller is genuine. Take your time when answering the door, think what you will do if it is an unwanted caller.
- Beware of all callers, including women and children, burglars don't always look suspicious. Many are well dressed and use persuasive language to impress you.
- Be particularly cautious of unexpected callers who appear at dusk or in the evening.
- Be wary of cowboy builders or roofers who say that your house is in need of repair. Most reputable builders do not cold call clients.
- Do not be tempted to leave the house to inspect an 'urgent repair' needed to the roof or guttering. Always seek 2 or 3 quotes before you ask a trader to do the work.
- When answering the front door, always ensure that the back door is locked.
- Do not allow anyone to enter your property to use the telephone or toilet.
- A favourite guise of a distraction burglar is to claim to represent the water, gas, electricity or the local council and frequently appear in overalls carrying a tool box.
- Ask to see identification and contact the relevant company/organisation to check they are who they say they are. All water, gas, electricity, telephone and council representatives carry identity cards with a photograph. Keep the door on the chain and ask the individual to pass the card to you for inspection. Genuine callers will not mind being asked for identification. Lock the door when you make the telephone call and do not invite the caller in until you are sure they are genuine.

Remember the Simple Message

LOCK	Ensure the back door is locked
STOP	Are you expecting anyone. Look through the window if possible to see who it is.
CHAIN	Put your door chain on before you open the door.
CHECK	Take the identification and look at it, if you are unsure, don't let them in. A genuine caller will not mind being challenged.

You should arrange with at least two neighbours on whom you can call for help.

Keep their telephone numbers beside the telephone

It is sometimes necessary to pay people at the door. This can be an anxious time, but following a few simple precautions can minimise the risk.

- It is advisable not to bring a bag, purse or wallet to the door.
- If at all possible pass money to the caller and receive any change whilst keeping the chain on the door.
- Report any suspicious callers to the police giving a good description of the individuals.

Door Step Sellers

When you answer the door, whatever the seller may say,

LOCK	Check back door is locked
STOP	Ask yourself - are they who they claim to be?
CHAIN	Use a spy hole and put the door chain on before you open the door. If you are alone and are worried about letting them in ask them to call back when someone else can be with you.
CHECK	An honest caller wont mind being asked to show some form of identification, but examine it carefully, If you think there is something suspicious, call the police.

Do I want to buy anything?

If you do not wish to buy anything, say “no thank you” and shut the door.

Am I being pressured?

You might be offered what appears to be a generous discount if you buy or sign on the spot, or you could be told that the price is about to go up- these are danger signals. The chances are that the seller doesn't want to give you a chance to change your mind. Even if you are interested you might get a better deal elsewhere. Say that you wish to think it over and do not sign anything. They won't mind calling back if they are genuine.

Could I get a better deal elsewhere?

Before you commit yourself to spend a lot of money on anything, find out what it would cost elsewhere, particularly for work on your home. Get quotations from at least two reputable firms and compare prices.

Can I afford it?

If you are buying on credit, insist on being told in writing how many instalments you will have to pay and what they add up to including credit charges. Look at the APR (Annual Percentage Rate) for the higher it is, the more you are paying back. Otherwise, you could end up paying more than you expected. Rogue salespeople often try to conceal the real cost. It's up to you to find out.

Can I find them again?

Goods sold by any trader must be of a “satisfactory quality”, “fit for the purpose” and as “described”. If they are not then in some cases you can return them and claim your money back. Services must be carried out with “reasonable care and skill” and within a reasonable time.” But having legal rights doesn’t help if you are unable to trace the seller or their company. Always keep a note of names and addresses. Be suspicious if the seller and or the company has only a mobile telephone number.

If you want to buy.

Sometimes it may be too late to have second thoughts after you have signed on the dotted line. Read carefully before you sign. “Sign here just for me to show my boss that I called” is familiar sales persons patter. Don’t do so unless you have read the form in full - and understand it. If anything is unclear, ask the caller to leave the form with you for a day or two and ask a friend to go over it with you.

If you are paying more than £35 for any thing, check that the agreement sets out your cancellation rights. Never sign a blank or partly completed form even if you are told it will save you paperwork. And never sign a satisfaction note or completion form until you are happy with every thing.

Know your rights

If, as a consequence of someone calling at your home (whether you invited them or not) you then enter into a contract for goods or services which cost more than £35 you usually have seven days to change your mind. The seller is obliged by law to give you written details of your right to cancel (with some exceptions), This may be included in the contract or on a separate form.

Failure to do this is a criminal offence, and the contract cannot be enforced. If you cancel the contract within this period in most case you are entitled to the return of your deposit. However, if you have already received certain goods (such as perishable foods) or if certain services have been carried out, then you will have to pay for these despite having cancelled the contract.

If you cancel the contract after goods have already been supplied to you, you must let the seller collect them. You are not obliged to return them. You must take reasonable care of them in the meantime.

- If you bought the goods or service on credit you usually have a five day cancellation period.
- If there is something wrong with the goods or they are not as described, you may have other rights against the seller.

This is a simplified summary of the law and does not deal with all the exemptions. If you would like further advice about doorstep sellers please contact,

Telephone Trading Standards for advice on Consumer Direct

08454 04 05 06

Tidiness Against Crime

Improving the neighbourhood so that people take pride in it deters crime and is an effective way of getting young people involved. If an area looks untidy with graffiti, broken windows, piles of rubbish, derelict buildings and land or abandoned cars, then crime may actually concentrate there.

Removing the dereliction and cleaning up the area may reduce crime but more importantly will reduce the disproportionate fear of crime. If an area looks as if people care for it, the criminal will be able to tell that the same people will not tolerate crime and will take positive action to maintain the environment.

One of the first tasks of a neighbourhood watch group should be to look around the area and make sure that it is clean and tidy and make it appear as if the residents are proud of it. This can involve simple things such as:

- Cleaning juvenile scribble off lamp posts and graffiti off walls and fences. Remove it quickly and regularly.
- Cleaning up litter, arrange with members for a regular sweep of the area.
- Try to ensure dogs don't wander loose or foul footpaths and grass areas – If there is a problem, contact the Council Dog Warden.
- Keep gardens neat and tidy, help those who are elderly or infirm to maintain their garden.
- Report defective street lights to the County Council and damage to footpaths to the local Parish or District council.
- Abandoned cars attract vandalism, they create a particular danger to young children, and may become targets for arson. Report details of such vehicles to the City or District Council for your area and they will ensure that they are removed.
- If you need help or advice contact the litter officer at your district council office.

The simple steps above could serve to take away some of the signs that a criminal will note when he is selecting his target.

Fire in the home

The majority of deaths and injuries from fire happen in the home, with the majority of these incidents being caused by the careless handling of fire or hot substances, portable heaters and candles placed too close to flammable materials.

If a fire occurs in your home you may have to make your escape in the dark and in difficult conditions. Escape from a fire will be a lot easier if you have already planned your escape route and know where to go.

- Make sure your planned escape route remains free of any obstructions. Everyone in the house should be made aware of the escape route.
- If you have serious mobility difficulties you may wish to consider having your bedroom on the ground floor, and as near as possible to an exit. If you need assistance to make your escape, it is essential that you have some means of summoning help by your bed, maybe an emergency buzzer or telephone.

Smoke Alarms

A smoke alarm can give you those precious minutes of warning that could help you and your family to get out safely. Smoke alarms cost little, are simple to fit and can give you peace of mind knowing you will be alerted to a fire in the home. Ensure you replace the battery once a year.

If you are hard of hearing there are special devices available, flashing lights or vibrating pads instead of an audible signal. Your local Fire Service will provide free advice on which device is most suitable.

What to do if a fire starts.

- If possible close the door of the room where the fire is and close all doors as you leave. This will help to delay the spread of fire and smoke.
- Before opening a closed door use the back of the hand to touch it. Don't open it if it feels warm – the fire will be on the other side.
- Get everyone out as quickly as possible. Don't bother to pick up valuables. Make your way out as safely as you can and try not to panic.
- Telephone the fire brigade on 999, clearly state the address of the fire.
- Never go back into the house until a fire officer has told you that it is safe to do so.

Almost all fires in the home are preventable. Cambridgeshire Fire & Rescue Service will be happy to advice on fire prevention and safety.