

Every day residential burglaries occur in San Diego. When officers investigate these crimes we can determine how and why a particular home or neighborhood was targeted.

Most of these burglaries go unsolved because serial numbers were not recorded and given to the officer taking the report. The burglar may have worn gloves or they stole small items that are easy to sell quickly so they are never in possession of stolen goods for very long. Expensive jewelry is commonly melted down to sell quickly as scrap so keep expensive jewelry or family heirlooms in a safe. Burglars know all your best hiding places and where you keep a hide a key.

Most burglary suspects drive through a particular neighborhood looking for easy targets, while others may have acquaintances that currently or previously lived in area and are familiar with the neighborhood or the residence. A large percentage of burglaries occur via unlocked gates, doors and windows.

Residential burglary suspects typically drive around a target neighborhood during daytime hours when most people are at work, they are looking for nice homes in quiet areas with nobody watching them. Make eye contact with people driving down your street.

A common method of “casing” used by suspects in residential burglaries is lengthy door knocking and doorbell ringing in an attempt to determine if anyone is home. This method has been used on several occasions in many jurisdictions, and is known to precede a burglary.

If the door is answered by a resident, the suspect will claim to be lost, solicit some type of service or product, or ask for someone that does not live there. If this happens to you and you believe this person is definitely casing, call the San Diego Police Department immediately at (619)531-2000. Try to obtain a good description, a direction of travel and a license plate number, if possible. If you see them go into a neighbor’s back yard or they are clearly looking for a way in, call 911.

If you do not want to answer the door for a solicitor, you can always yell from behind the closed door that you are not interested. If you are home and you do not acknowledge you are home, there is a possibility the suspect will attempt to get in believing you are not home.

Should someone attempt to break into your home, call 9-1-1 immediately and flee the residence via an exit that is the farthest away from where the suspect is breaking in? Cell phones can be carried with you as you leave. Calling 9-1-1 from your cell phone.

We also know that many residential burglaries occur via open garages where people are home but are either in the house or in the backyard. It is not uncommon in this case for thieves to go through the garage or an unlocked front door to steal valuables while you are busy in the backyard. Residents should lock their front doors, even when they are home, and close their garage doors when not present in their front yard.

Finally, we know that in most residential burglaries, the point of entry is the side or rear of the residence, out of sight of any passers-by. Often, a burglar breaks in at a rear sliding glass door, kitchen or bedroom window. Many times these areas are left unlocked. Many burglars carry tools

and will pry open sliding windows or even large sliding doors.

The only way to stop these determined burglars is to use some type of pin-locking device that prevents the burglar from removing the sliding door or window from its track. Treat your side gate like your front door — keep it locked! Even a small combination lock will deter most burglars to seek easier residences.

Once a burglar makes it into your rear yard he is as good as in your house. Just like having large amounts of foliage in the front yard, if a burglar feels concealed from neighbors and the street, they will take the extra time to get in. If you have maintenance or pool service, buy a pushbutton combination lockset and give them the combination. Don't forget to change the combination periodically.

Once inside, almost all burglars go straight to the master bedroom or other areas where residents will likely store jewelry, cash or guns. If there is no alarm system, burglars will feel they have more time; and the rest of the house will be ransacked. Few televisions or DVD players are ever taken, but in addition to jewelry, cash and guns, laptops, cameras, cell phones and credit cards are also a common loss.

We strongly recommend that residents secure a safe, professionally bolted to the floor for any type of valuable keepsakes that cannot be replaced, like wedding rings or other family heirlooms. You may also consider keeping such items at the bank in a safety deposit box.

Laundry rooms, bookcases, attics, refrigerators/freezers and even garages can also be used to make it more difficult to find your priceless valuables.

So how do you “harden the target” and at least reduce the likelihood of becoming a victim of a residential burglary? Here are some suggestions:

- Consider owning a dog (burglars hate attention). If you don't have a dog, make it look as if you have a large dog. Simply putting a large dog toy inside the side gate may deter a burglar.
- Install an alarm system,
- Video surveillance systems are very affordable nowadays and a great deterrent. Doorbell and small video systems are a cheaper alternative to video cameras.
- visually inspect your rear yard. If a burglar enters undetected into your backyard, anticipate how he will try to break into your home, and “harden the target.”
- Do not have an open-door policy when it comes to burglars. Lock your front door, even when you are home.
- When no one is at home, always keep your doors and windows locked.
- Do not leave jewelry and cash where it is easy to find.

- Secure all your doors and windows when you leave.
- Install solid-core doors with deadbolt locks.
- Use locking pins or dowels on sliding windows and doors (1-2 inch gap if needed for ventilation.)
- Engrave a personal identification number on valuable items such as electronics.
- Take close-up, detailed photos of expensive jewelry.
- Prepare and keep safe a list of valuable items and their serial or personal identification numbers.
- Use a radio/light timing device when on vacation. (Google “fake TV” as an option.)
- Have a neighbor pick up your mail and newspaper (or have it temporarily stopped), and check on your house periodically when you are on vacation. Arrange for a vacation check by our Retired Senior Volunteer Patrol (RSVP) by calling (858) 552-1737.
- Be alert and observant. Alert neighbors are responsible for the majority of arrests made in Residential burglaries. If something appears suspicious, immediately contact the San Diego Police Department at (619) 531-2000, or dial 9-1-1 to report a crime in progress.