



Wolverhampton Homes



West Midlands Police

# Securing Your Home

Straightforward advice and a simple  
DIY survey to assist you in  
securing your home.

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## From the burglars eyes

- ◆ Most burglars will wander around to identify potential targets. They will look at homes from the road, any adjoining track or footpath, playing field or other open land before deciding which home to break into. At this time, the burglar has not even approached your premises.
- ◆ Burglars will initially look for a home that appears to be unoccupied and has easy access to the back of the building. They will study the surrounding area to see if it will provide good cover, for example trees and high shrubbery. Dustbins emptied by the collectors and left on footpaths for hours are a good indication no one is at home. Post or newspapers protruding from letterboxes gives the same idea.
- ◆ Burglars prefer homes that have no visible signs of protection such as alarms and lighting.

Having chosen the property, the burglar will do several things. For example:

- ◆ Look through the windows to see inside
- ◆ Ring the doorbell to check if anyone is at home, or if there's a dog.
- ◆ Check if there are any neighbours watching.
- ◆ Break in if conditions are suitable.

The burglar may be in your home for only a few minutes. However, the distress caused can haunt some victims for the rest of their lives.

If you were locked out of your house, how would you gain entry? Would it be easy for you? If so, then action needs to be taken to prevent it being easy for a criminal. Look at your house from the criminal's point of view. Keep in mind they may be fitter and more agile than you! Generally, if there is sufficient room for a head to get through, the rest of the body can squeeze in!

Is valuable or vulnerable property easily visible in your house? If so, consider moving it out of sight.

Mark valuable or vulnerable property with your postcode and house number or name. Ultra-Violet pens are widely available to do this covertly. However, if criminals can see a visible mark on property inside the house (*see back page*), it will deter them from breaking in, as they cannot easily dispose of the property. Stickers advertising your property is security marked may also discourage them from breaking in.

Safes (*see back page*) are readily available from DIY and specialist retailers. They are relatively easy to install and are ideal for securing important documents, jewellery and other small valuables, including spare keys. Large amounts of cash should not be hoarded in your house whether in a safe or not. Your insurance may only cover the loss of a certain amount of cash.

Several security products and their providers can be found on the 'Secured by Design' website, [www.securedbydesign.com](http://www.securedbydesign.com), under 'License Holders'. The website will also provide more detailed advice on security.

**Use the attached survey to assess the security of your home.**

## **The Front of Your Home**

Keep hedges, trees and shrubs trimmed to a reasonable height to allow neighbours or passers by maximum view of your property. A good rule of thumb is to maintain the height of hedges and shrubs to about that of ground floor windowsills. Trees should have no branches or foliage below about 2.4m (8'). This allows a good field of view between the top of any shrubbery and the bottom of tree foliage.

A closed gate to the front of the drive is a good physical and psychological barrier to the burglar and not so easy to sneak past. Fences, hedges or walls to the perimeter of the front garden provide similar defence. Wolverhampton Local Authority may allow up to 1.0m (3'3") in a front garden. Check with the planning office on 01902 556556.

Outside lighting and intruder alarms are an excellent deterrent and are proven to reduce the risk of burglary.

'Dusk to dawn' lighting, operated by a photo-electric cell, can be run using energy efficient, long-life bulbs. PIR (Passive Infra-Red) operated lights generally use high wattage halogen bulbs. These lights can cause nuisance to neighbours and road users if not correctly positioned or angled. They do not distinguish between human or animal movement and are frequently switched by cats, dogs, foxes or even wind blown tree branches. Burglars can also wait until the light has extinguished, out of the field of the PIR, before breaking in. 'Dusk to dawn' lights remain lit all night, at little cost using low energy bulbs. *(see back page)*

Street lighting is an important factor in the fight against crime. It is proven that good lighting reduces crime and the fear of crime. If the street lighting in your road is severely obscured by overgrown trees or not working, contact the Local Authority lighting department on 01902 555696.

Net curtains prevent a burglar looking into your home and seeing items worth stealing.

Dustbins should be removed from the footpath as soon as possible after they are emptied. Perhaps a neighbour could do this for you. Dustbins should be secured to an immovable object away from the fabric of the house where they cannot be used as a step-up to scale fences, gates or access a flat roof. Wheelie-bins also make an excellent 'getaway' vehicle for the burglar to transport stolen goods!

Check that there are no other easy steps-up available to criminals to scale fences or walls.

If at all possible, park your car in a garage. They are very tempting for criminals, especially expensive models. A burglary of your home may be committed simply to obtain car keys. If you cannot park your car in a garage, park it on the drive if you have one and consider installing a lockable post at the end of the drive to prevent the car being driven away.

If you have to park the car outside, on the drive or in the road, remove **all**, not only expensive, items from view in the car.

## The Rear of Your Home

There should be **no** open access to the rear of the house from the front or side. The passages between terraced houses, known locally as 'entries', should be gated at the very front of the passage so anyone attempting to enter or climb the gate can easily be seen.

Gates should be lockable and built so there are no 'steps' created to assist climbing. Steel-railed gates allow surveillance in both directions so no one can hide behind the gate. Criminal activity may be observed from the road or the driveway. Padlocks (see *back page*) should be 'closed shackle' and pad bolts (used with padlocks) should be fitted using tamper proof security fixings. (Alternatively, the head of the screw can be ruined to prevent its easy removal).

All fences, walls, hedges or gates erected at the front of the house to prevent access to the rear, should be built as close to the front building line of the house as possible. This will maximise the possibility of neighbours or passers-by seeing anyone climbing it.

Low or damaged fencing to the rear allows easy access to your property. Gates, fences, walls or hedges to the rear of your house should be at least 1.8m (6') high. Wolverhampton Local Authority generally allow up to 2.0m (6' 6"). Check with the planning office on 01902 556556. A wooden trellis fixed to the top is very effective. If climbed, it will break, create noise and attract attention. Spiky or thorny plants such as pyracantha (firethorn), berberis or climbing roses can be trained through the trellis making it even more difficult to climb.

Garden sheds often contain a collection of tools very useful to the burglar. Some criminals even specialise in burgling sheds and stealing tools, bikes, lawnmowers and other garden equipment. (Just add up the cost of replacing your shed contents!) A house burglar can use garden tools to enter your house, so it is important to secure them. If the fabric of the shed itself is flimsy, it is pointless adding expensive locking devices, as the wood to which they are fitted will simply splinter. Not only may you have to replace the stolen items, but possibly the shed itself! It is more effective to fasten shed contents together using a closed shackle padlock and good quality chain or braided steel cable with eyelet ends passed through handles and frames. Smaller items may be secured in a steel toolbox; itself secured by the chain or steel cable. An alarmed, locking steel cable is now available which sounds a 120-decibel siren if cut or tampered with.

Do not leave ladders lying around. These provide the burglar with the means to access upstairs windows. Keep them secure, possibly locked and chained to a wall.

Criminals may also use garden furniture to ease access to transom windows. If possible, secure such items together when not in use, away from the fabric of the house.

It is important to consider the type of lighting required in a rear garden. Remember that good lighting deters criminals as it increases the chances of their being seen. Is a single 500-watt PIR operated light effective to illuminate all parts of the garden without creating shadowed areas? Two lower wattage lights more strategically placed may increase the illuminated area and decrease the number of shadowed spots. Whatever type of lamp is fitted, correct angling is essential to maximise the use of light provided.

## **Burglar Alarms**

There are many types of burglar alarms available, ranging from DIY kits to those fitted by professional alarm companies. Most can be fitted within a day and should not cause damage to interior decoration.

When buying an alarm from a company, consider the following: -

- ◆ Before disclosing personal details, check the address and credentials of the company and ask for proof of identity.
- ◆ Is the company subject to an independent inspection and, if so, by which organisation? Confirm this.
- ◆ Is the alarm a requirement of your insurance company and, if so, is the company acceptable to your insurer? At the present time, your insurer may only recognise NACOSS approved alarm installers.
- ◆ Seek written quotations from at least two alarm installers.
- ◆ Does the quotation specify the installation will be to BS 4737 or BS 7042 (high security systems) or, if it is wire free, BS 6799 clause 6? Does it include the terms of maintenance and any monitoring contracts?
- ◆ Does the company operate a 24-hour call-out service and offer emergency attendance?

***The police will respond to an alarm only when it is confirmed (by either technology or a human witness) that a crime is being or has been committed.***

### **Home Grown Security**

Bushes and shrubs can be a burglar's dream in providing cover for their activities. However, they can be made into a burglar's nightmare. The planting of a prickly hedge such as firethorn, climbing rose or hawthorn, against existing fencing will act as a powerful deterrent.

Other plants which provide natural protection are: -

Holly Blackthorn Berberis Rosa Rugosa

Many garden centres will be able to identify suitable plants and those best for your garden and the aspect in which they are to grow.

## Door Security

Remember to remove keys from locks and keep them where criminals can't access them. However, bear in mind the need to access keys quickly for emergency escape.

- ◆ Make sure **all** exterior doors and frames are strong and in good condition. Timber doors should have a solid core and be at least 44mm (1 ¾") thick. Doorframes can be strengthened at locking points by the addition of metal strips called Birmingham bars or London bars. Doorframes frequently split when force is applied to the door, leaving the lock intact, but the door can still be opened. Some doors have thin plywood panels to their lower section. These can be reinforced by the addition of 12mm plywood or MDF (Medium Density Fibreboard) to the *inside* of the door. The 12mm board should overlap the existing thin panel by about 40mm (1 ½") on both sides, top and bottom. This should be screwed and glued to the framework of the door using four size 10-14 screws, to the maximum length the door thickness will accept, along each edge. Suitable bracing between the original thin ply panel and the new, thicker panel should be glued on to the thin panel before fixing the new panel. Decorative beading can be added to edges of the board if desired.
- ◆ Laminated glass, at least 6.4mm thick, should be used for glazing in **all** exterior door and door surround areas. Wooden beading should be glued and screwed, or glued and pinned with annular ring (ribbed) nails to prevent easy removal.
- ◆ Front doors should have a viewer to identify callers, unless there is suitable glazing. A door-chain or door bar should also be fitted. Door bars are easier to operate, particularly for people with impaired vision, or arthritis sufferers. When fitting, it may be wise to use the longest, thickest screws the door and security product will take, not necessarily those provided with the product.
- ◆ Front doors should ideally be locked using a multi-point deadlocking system with three or more deadbolts/hook bolts. Alternatively, an automatic deadlocking rimlock (nightlatch) should be fitted one third from the top of the door, with a five lever mortise deadlock and boxed keep one third from the bottom of the door. It is recommended locks complying with BS 3621 are fitted.

- ◆ Back and side doors should ideally be secured using a multi-point deadlocking system as above. Alternatively, a five lever mortise sashlock (as mortise deadlock above, but with a handle) should be fitted avoiding construction joints, together with key operated mortise bolts (also called rack bolts) fitted at the top and bottom of the door.
- ◆ All outward-opening doors should be fitted with hinge bolts to prevent the door being forced on the hinge side. Ensure screws used to fit hinges are the correct size and all screw holes in all hinges are used.
- ◆ Patio doors made recently will incorporate a multi-point locking system. On older units and those without multi-point locking, fit special patio door locks to the top **and** bottom of the sliding door. Also ensure an 'anti-lift' device is used to prevent the sliding door being levered off its runners.
- ◆ French windows generally open outwards, have exposed hinges and two flexible edges. These are especially susceptible to attack from levering instruments, screwdrivers, jemmys, garden spades or forks. Security can easily be improved by fitting mortise or surface mounted locking bolts on the inside, to the top and bottom of both doors, together with hinge bolts and frame reinforcement. A five-lever mortise lock should be fitted to the first opening leaf of the doors, midway between top and bottom.
- ◆ Garage doors can be up and over opening or traditionally side hinged. It is important to secure garage doors, particularly if the garage is attached to your house and a door from the garage accesses the house.  
Up and over doors can be secured using padlocks in the side runners, preventing the rollers moving. Alternatively, purpose made up and over door locks can be fitted. Wooden side hinged garage doors require security similar to French windows as above.

## Window Security

Windows are the most frequent points of entry used by burglars. How secure are yours?

The British Standards Institute (BSI) sets standards for the common materials used in window frames. The BSI 'kitemark' indicates the products have been independently tested for weather tightness and mechanical performance. However, the basic BS number and kitemark are **not** endorsements of the product's security. BS 7950 is a specification for enhanced security performance of casement and tilt/turn windows.

- ◆ **Timber** (BS 644 or the BWF Timber Window Accreditation Scheme (TWAS). Existing timber frames should be checked to ensure they are robust and not suffering from damp, wear or rot, which will reduce their security. If defective, either repair or replace.

When fitting glass into timber frames and doors, wooden beading is recommended, glued and screwed, or glued and pinned with annular ring (ribbed) nails to prevent easy removal.

- ◆ **Metal** (BS 4873 - Aluminium or BS 6510 – Steel)  
Older metal frames and fixings may suffer from corrosion and loose locking systems, reducing their security. Check at least annually and repair or replace if defective.

- ◆ **PVC-u** (BS 7412)

The problem with these frames is the wide range of styles and quality available. To be confident that a window offers improved security, look for a written guarantee that it is to BS 7950 and has: -

- ✓ Full metal reinforcing
- ✓ Multi chamber construction
- ✓ Impact modified PVCu
- ✓ Ventilation
- ✓ Been independently tested for security

## **Window Locks**

In the absence of a multi-point locking system, all ground floor windows and those which open on to accessible areas, balconies or flat roofs, should be fitted with window locks, unless designated as a means of escape. These escape route windows must be glazed with minimum thickness 6.4mm laminated glass. If replacing ground floor or vulnerable glazing, consider the use of laminated glass, it is much more secure.

People generally fit one lock per window. However, a wider or taller window will require more locks than a narrow or short one. Locks should be fitted either side of a wide transom (hinges at the top) window and at the top and bottom of a casement (hinges at the side)

window. If there is any flexing possible to the opening section of the frame when the window is closed, it requires additional locks to prevent insertion of levering tools such as screwdrivers, chisels, jemmys, garden spades or forks.

If first floor bedroom windows are inaccessible to a criminal, it may be an unnecessary expense fitting locks to them. However, many people feel more secure if their bedroom windows are lockable, particularly those in bungalows.

**It is essential you have easy access to keys to bedroom window locks and exit doors in the event of fire or other emergency.**

Window lock keys are usually small and awkward to insert into the lock. Attach the key to a small torch by cord or chain and keep it nearby at night. Light will be available from the torch in the event of an emergency, the key will be easier to find or pick up if dropped in panic and it is less likely to become wedged behind a radiator beneath the window if dropped. Remember to check the torch batteries regularly. Take exit door keys into your bedroom at night, but hide them or take them with you when you leave the house during the day.

Louvre window slats should be glued into the end plates to prevent easy removal. Where possible, replace louvre windows with fixed glass panels, preferably laminated.

### **Glass**

Vulnerable glazed areas such as ground floor windows, those accessible from flat roof extensions, all external doors and their surrounds, French windows and patio doors, should use minimum 6.4mm Laminated Safety Glass. It improves security *and* offers a safer environment inside the home.

In double glazed units, laminated glass on both the inner and outer surfaces will offer the ultimate protection. However, one pane of laminated glass may be sufficient to prevent entry. It is generally recommended that the laminated pane is fitted on the inside surface, thereby offering protection from the burglar and reduced risk of accidental injury to the occupants.

For laminated glass to be most effective, it should be installed in frames that are also capable of resisting criminal attack.

Types of glass most commonly available are: -

- 4.0mm Float Glass (used for normal window glazing. £12.57+VAT square m)
- 4.0mm Toughened Glass (used for safety applications. £22.66+VAT square m)
- 4.0mm Georgian Wired Glass (used for fire safety. £26.14+VAT square m)
- 6.4mm Laminated Safety Glass (used for security and safety. £33.68+VAT square m)

Prices are approximate and based on supply only in February 2002.

Though Laminated Glass is initially more expensive, consider the cost saving both financially and emotionally if it prevents a burglary.

**Many people are under the misapprehension that Toughened glass is strong. *It is not*. It is simply a safety glass that shatters into thousands of small pieces with no sharp edges leaving a gaping hole to climb or reach through. It breaks easily, with a dull thud. It is regarded by police officers as 'burglar friendly'!**

### **Neighbourhood Watch**

Neighbourhood Watch is a community led initiative supported by the police. It aims to reduce the opportunity for crime and improve community safety by the reporting of suspicious incidents to the police and each other. It is a vital tool in the fight against crime.

Research has shown that areas where Neighbourhood Watch is operating are less likely to be targeted by burglars.

The Partnerships Officer at Wolverhampton police station, available on 01902 481384, will give information and offer assistance in setting up a Neighbourhood Watch scheme. It takes very little time to administer and can be beneficial both financially, through insurance discounts, and by giving members 'peace of mind'.

### **Callers at the Door**

Be very wary of anyone calling at your door offering to do repairs or gardening. If they claim you need work done, ring a reputable company. **NEVER** allow them into your home or garden. Most utility services offer a password scheme and phone number which you can ring to check the identity of callers. **Do Not** phone a number given by the caller to the door, they may be giving you the number of an accomplice. Keep a list of utility phone numbers handy by the phone so you know you are calling the correct people.

You can ask the caller to return at a more convenient time, giving you opportunity to arrange to have someone with you at the appointed time. Alternatively, if a trusted neighbour is willing, you can arrange to have the caller visit them and return with that neighbour. Care should be taken that the willing neighbour's house is not the target whilst they are out!

### **Insurance**

Most reputable insurance companies have their own requirements concerning home security. These may be more precise than the information given above. Before committing yourself to substantial expenditure on any security device it is always sensible to confirm with your insurer that your intentions meet with their recommendations.

### **Useful telephone numbers**

1. West Midlands Police 0845 113 5000
2. Wolverhampton City Council 01902 556556
3. Wolverhampton Homes  
<http://www.wolverhamptonhomes.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/31CE0838-1692-4B4D-82E4-5BC4AED4B975/0/WolverhamptonHomesContactDetails.pdf>
4. Highways (Lighting) 01902 555696
5. Environmental Health 01902 554303
6. Trading Standards 01902 556052
7. Victim Support 01902 310511
8. Neighbourhood Watch 01902 481384
9. Crimestoppers 0800 555111
10. ASBU - WCC
11. Mediation Service

**Useful links**

[www.neighbourhoodpolicing.co.uk](http://www.neighbourhoodpolicing.co.uk)

[www.respect.gov.uk](http://www.respect.gov.uk)