



PARTNERS IN CRIME PREVENTION

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BURGLARIES— SINGLE FAMILY HOMES

In our area, there seems to be an uptick to burglaries during the summer months. There can be several reasons for this:

- Longer daylight hours gives potential burglars more opportunity to break into homes.
- Homeowners may be more active during the summer months going to activities after work.
- More homeowners go on vacation.
- People leave windows and doors open to cool off in the summer heat.
- More people work in the garden in the backyard leaving their garage doors open.
- Younger criminals are out of school and have more time to check things out.

No matter why, summer is a time to remind ourselves to take basic precautions in burglary prevention.

A 2010 study, “The Problem of Burglary of Single Family Houses” by Deborah Lamm Wiesel gives a nationwide view of

burglaries and burglars (<http://ric-zai-inc.com/ric.php?page=detail&id=COPS-P032>). While much of the report is meant for the police professional, it does provide insights that average homeowners can use to simply and inexpensively protect their houses.

The author does warn that to be truly effective, we need to understand our own problems. Knowing what the average burglar does is helpful. But, each, individual burglar has his/her own way of doing things.

Much of this information is available to police agencies such as the Sheriff’s Office. But, when you can, you should pay attention to information that can help you ensure that you are taking effective steps to protect your property.

In this issue, we will discuss the typical burglar, the types of houses a burglar targets, and provide some prevention tips that you can use to protect your home and your valuables.



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BURGLARIES— REPORTING SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY

Neighborhoods where the homeowners know each other tend to be the safest from burglaries. It is easier for each neighbor to determine who is a stranger and to determine unusual activity.

If you do not know your neighbors, introduce yourself. You do not have to socialize with them regularly, but knowing who should be in your neighborhood goes a long way to knowing when your neighborhood may be in danger of suffering a burglary.

Sheriff's Deputies frequently ask citizens to call 911 when they see "suspicious" activity. You are the best judge of what is suspicious. And your timely call to 911 gives deputies their best chance to capture a burglar in the act.

Don't worry if it turns out that no crime is associated with what you thought was suspicious. Deputies get frustrated when a crime is in progress and no one calls.

BURGLARIES— THE TYPICAL BURGLAR

Who the typical burglar is can vary with the individual and with the location where the burglaries occur. The study "The Problem of Burglary of Single Family Houses" does try to characterize the typical burglar based on nationwide data and studies. While our local burglars may be a little different, having a general picture of the typical burglar may help to understand the burglary problem and how to prevent burglaries.

Nationwide most burglars are male, under 25 and white.

Burglars can be very prolific with some carrying out at least two burglaries a week. Other may not be as prolific.

Burglars tend not to specialize in burglary. They will conduct other crimes including property, violent and drug related. Some may specialize in burglaries for short periods of time. Burglars have the highest rate of recidivism (of offending again) of all property offenders.

Much of the research characterizes burglars as novice, middle-range or professional. Most burglars are novices. Novices tend to be younger, gain the least from their burglaries, operate in their own neighborhoods, and are easiest to be deterred by dogs, alarms, or locks. Professional burglars tend to be older, will take on larger

more challenging burglaries, will take on security devices, and will target homes outside of their neighborhoods. Professionals tend to have well established outlets for their good than do novices.

Most local burglars tend to be opportunistic. This follow with most burglars being younger and novices. Some burglars may do at least some planning before they offend, however.

The motivation for burglary is an important element to understanding the typical burglar. Most local police and deputies would probably tell you that burglars offend to feed their drug habit. And studies do show that most burglars need quick cash for drugs or alcohol. Younger burglars may get a thrill out of doing burglaries. And small number of burglars may offend to take out revenge on an ex-girlfriend or employer.

Many burglars use their proceeds to finance partying that frequently has heavy use of drugs and alcohol.

Heroin and marijuana users usually are more cautious in their burglaries while cocaine users may take more risks.

In many cases, burglars know their victims as acquaintances, neighbors, or have provided some service to them.

BURGLARIES– THE BEST TARGETS

Several factors go into a burglar’s assessment of a target’s risk, reward and ease of entry. They include:

Familiarity with the target and it’s convenience. Most burglars offend near where they live. They will target houses on their way to and from work or school or other common routes. Houses that may be especially vulnerable include those near a large pool of offenders, those near major streets, those on the edges of neighborhoods (where strangers may not be noticed as readily), houses that have previously been burglarized, and houses near burglarized houses.

Occupancy. Most burglars stay away from houses that they think might be occupied. Locally, many burglars will routinely ring the doorbell or knock on the front door to ensure no one is home. Houses most vulnerable are those that look vacant for extended periods (signs may include open garage doors, accumulated mail or newspapers), houses routinely vacant during the day, houses of new residents (who have not met their new neighbors yet), houses without dogs.

Visibility. Houses that are hidden or cannot be seen by the casual passerby tend to be targets for burglars. These include houses with cover (tall, sight obscuring fences or hedges, or overgrown trees or shrubs), secluded houses, houses with poor lighting (especially vulnerable for car prowls or break ins to outer buildings), houses on corners.

Accessibility. Burglars will assess the ease

of entry at the lowest risk. Side or back doors give the lowest risk. Front doors can be easier entry points if they are not visible from a street. Houses next to alleys can also provide good entry and exit for burglars.

Vulnerability or security. Houses that can appear most vulnerable include those with weakened entry points such as rusting locks, decaying window and door frames, or cheap materials. Houses where the residents appear to be careless about their security can attract burglars. Unlocked doors, unlocked or open windows, open garage doors are good signs. Houses with few or no security devices will attract burglars. Use of sturdy window locks, dead bolt locks, security lights and alarms will discourage burglars. Burglars will avoid houses with a sign in the front yard stating that an alarm is on the premises.

Potential rewards. Burglars will assess a houses wealth based on the size and condition of the house and the type of cars in the driveway. Large well maintain houses may be vulnerable. However, burglars avoid more expensive houses on the assumption that they will have more security. Also, burglars may take the opportunity to enter a house if they can see valuable items such as tool sets or expensive motorbikes/boats through open garage doors, or see electronic devices through the windows of the house.

BURGLARY TENDANCIES

- *In the U.S., burglary rates are highest in August and lowest in February.*
- *60% of burglaries occur during the day.*
- *Burglars take cash or items that they can easily carry and sell .*
- *Outlets for the stolen goods can include pawnshops, taxi drivers, small store owners, on the street, bars, or gas stations.*
- *About two-thirds of burglaries are through forced entry where the burglar uses simple tools.*
- *About one-third of burglaries are through unforced entry where entry is through unlocked or open windows and doors, and open interior and exterior garage doors.*

BURGLARIES– SOME PREVENTION TIPS

The study’s findings give some hints of what you can do to protect your home from a burglary.

Make your house look occupied. Some ways to do that include:

- Keep a vehicle in the driveway.
- Keep a radio going inside the house.
- When you are on vacation have a trusted neighbor pick up your newspaper and mail or have the newspaper and Post Office hold your paper and mail.

Make your house visible from the street.

- Be sure trees are pruned up to 6 feet in height and shrubs are no taller than 3 to 4 feet.
- Any fencing in the front should be 3 to 4 feet tall or should give a clear view of the house. A 6 foot cedar fence may give privacy to your, but also gives privacy to a burglar.
- Have good lighting in the garage area to discourage car prowls at night.

Make your house more secure and less accessible.

- Be sure doors and windows on the side and back of your house have strong locks. Deadbolts for doors and 3 inch or longer screws in the door jam. Charley bars for sliding glass doors.
- Consider an alarm for your house. It can be monitored or not monitored. If you have an alarm, be sure to have a sign in the front warning that an alarm is on the premises. Most burglars will target another house.
- Consider a video security system. Even if a burglar breaks into your house, you will have evidence that you can provide the Sheriff’s Office.
- Close your doors and windows when you leave your home!
- Use your locks when you leave your home!
- Whenever you can, keep your valuables out of sight when you are not using them.

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SHERIFF’S OFFICE CRIME PREVENTION WEB PAGE:

<http://www.snohomishcountywa.gov/289/Crime-Prevention>

NEWSLETTER INFO

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If you have questions regarding this newsletter or any articles that appear in it, please contact the editor at neighborhoodwatch@snoco.org

TIP LINES



Snohomish County Sheriff’s Office: 425-388-3845

<http://www.snoco.org/app/ssh/anonymoustips/>

Crime Stoppers of Puget Sound: 1-800-222-8477