



# PARTNERS IN CRIME PREVENTION

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## PROPERTY CRIMES— SHERIFF'S OFFICE UNIT INVESTIGATES

Sgt. William Geohagan's Robbery and Burglary Unit has a daunting task. Not only does the unit investigate robberies and burglaries it investigates non-violent felony property crimes, thefts, fraud, identity theft, extortion, vehicle prowls, and large dollar financial crimes.

Over the three years of the pandemic, the unit with 1 sergeant and 6 detectives investigated between 3,600 and 5,000 cases.

### Case Types 2020 2021 2022

Robbery	102	78	99
Burglary	1036	1035	992
Fraud	18	13	21
ID Theft	1592	420	249
Theft	850	983	1251
Vehicle Prowl	1318	1200	950
Total Cases	4916	3729	3562

With the unit's limited resources, it needs to triage cases that it investigates. The unit looks for good suspect information and evidence that enhances the solvability of the case. It also looks for characteristics of other cases that can help solvability.

On a day to day basis, the unit prioritizes cases. Robberies take priority. Robberies by definition involve violence or implied violence to persons so they are first in line. Next come burglaries or thefts involving the theft of firearms. Clearly, the theft of a firearm can lead to its use in another violent crime like a robbery, assault, or homicide.

Burglaries and thefts can occur at residences or businesses. Slightly more residences are burglarized than businesses on average per year.

Robberies are more associated with businesses, but there are a handful of residences that are robbed, that is a suspect coerces people to give the suspect property by using the threat of violence or actual violence.

Any of the crimes that the Robbery and Burglary Unit investigates represents a traumatic event, whether the victim witnesses the crime or discovers it after the crime has occurred. They represent a violation of people's personal space. The Robbery and Burglary Unit dedicates itself to hold accountable those people who violate the sanctity of other people's home or business.



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## 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.*

## PREVENTING BURLGARIES- WHAT YOU SHOULD DO

Burglars are opportunists and they look for the places that present the least risk to get caught. This means that they often look for houses that are not as visible from the street where casual observers can observe them entering the house and then call 911.

To ensure that no one is at home, they often ring the doorbell or knock on the door. If someone answers they may make an excuse, like they were looking for someone, and go to the next house.

If they are satisfied that no one is at home, then they will kick in the front door, or a side or back door, or break a window to enter the house. Then they will go through the house, find what they can, then leave. They do not stay long, 5 minutes would be an eternity. The longer they stay, the more likely that they will be caught.

What can you do to protect your home from a burglary? There are several things that you can do.

Sgt. Geohagan observes that people seem not to know their neighbors and that fewer people are involved in some sort of Neighborhood Watch.

Neighborhood Watch can help reduce and prevent crime better than just relying on Sheriff's Deputies alone. Sgt. Geohagan points out that if you know your neighbors, you know better when there is suspicious activity going on in your neighborhood.

Neighborhood Watches work by:

- Improving communications between neighbors and between the neighborhood and deputies.
- Educating the neighborhood about crime threats and crime prevention.
- Increasing surveillance to catch or deter criminals.

Other actions you can take include:

### 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 property, but it also gives privacy to a burglar. If you have a gate to your back yard be sure to have a lock that can be operated from inside the back yard.
- Have good lighting in the garage area to discourage car prowls at night.

## PREVENTING BURGLARIES- CONTINUED

### 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. Use Charley bars or wooden dowels in the tracks for sliding glass doors.
- Close and lock your doors and windows when you leave your home!
- If you have an alarm system, be sure to have a sign in the front warning that an alarm is on the premises. Most burglars will target another house.
- Don't have things lying around, especially ladders that would allow burglars to enter from the second floor.
- Keep your garage door closed. An open garage door invites a burglar to take anything in your garage and, if it is attached, in your house. Be sure to lock the door between your house and the garage.
- Whenever you can, keep your valuables out of sight when you are not using them. Keep them in a safety deposit box or a hidden safe that is bolted to the floor.

- **Inventory your valuables**– If you are the victim of a burglary or theft and you can give a list of what was taken with good descriptions to investigating deputies, you have a better chance of recovering your stolen property and the deputies have a better chance to make an arrest. Take pictures of your valuables (front, back, serial numbers if available) especially of your jewelry, electronics and power tools. Also, make a list of your valuables with clear, complete descriptions. You can make your list on a document or spreadsheet. Copy your inventory onto the cloud, thumb drive or portable hard drive. Make at least three copies; keep a copy in the cloud, place another copy in a safety deposit box and keep a copy at home in a safe place (outside of your computer).

### 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.

## 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.*

## PREVENTING BURGLARIES- CAMERAS AND ALARMS

### Cameras.

Surveillance cameras have become very popular with homeowners. Surveillance systems are inexpensive with some offering a capability to save video in the cloud or in a DVR on premises.

Sgt Geohagan notes that the Sheriff's Office receives a lot of video of potential crime scenes. Not all of the video that the Sheriff's Office sees, however, gives the best evidence for an arrest.

Sgt Geohagan recommends:

- Place cameras at points of ingress and egress. For example, with a view of your driveway to show people coming and going from your property. Also, views of your front door and back door to show people going into and out of your house.
- Where you can, place cameras inconspicuously at head level to get the best view of a person's face. Cameras placed above head level can easily be obscured with a hat.
- Be familiar with your system. If you are burglarized, you will be

traumatized and you probably will be angry. Knowing how your system works will help you turn over any evidence of the crime more easily. Play with your system from time to time to ensure that you know how it works.

### Alarms.

Alarms can alert you or a monitoring company of the presence of an unauthorized person in your house. An audible alarm can cause a burglar to leave your house and alert neighbors of a burglar in the neighborhood. But 911 often gets a call from the alarm company 10 to 15 minutes after the alarm is first tripped. By that time the burglar is gone.

The best response comes from a neighbor who sees suspicious activity around your house and immediately calls 911.

If you have an alarm installed, monitored or not, have a speaker installed on the outside of your house. If your alarm is tripped, the siren will sound, alerting your neighbors and scaring the burglar. A simple alarm is best especially if you use it.

Get in the habit of arming your alarm every time you leave your home.

### SHERIFF'S OFFICE RESOURCES

#### CRIME PREVENTION UNIT

#### CRIME PREVENTION UNIT EMAIL:

[crime.prevention@snoco.org](mailto:crime.prevention@snoco.org)

#### CRIME MAPPING:

For information about crime incidents around your neighborhood checkout this link:

<https://www.snohomishcountywa.gov/236/Community-Crime-Map>

#### SHERIFF'S OFFICE CRIME PREVENTION WEB PAGE:

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

### NEWSLETTER INFO

#### EDITOR

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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](mailto:neighborhoodwatch@snoco.org)

### TIP LINES



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

<http://snohomishcountywa.gov/303/Anonymous-Tips>

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