

# A Guide for Protecting Your Home and Property

## Introduction

We are fortunate in Fairfax County to have excellent cooperation between the police department and the citizens we protect. However, we need to continue working together to promote crime prevention, and it starts at home. Criminals look for targets of opportunity. Through our cooperative effort, we can eliminate, or at least decrease, your chances of becoming a victim.

This booklet will assist you in many ways to improve the safety and security of your neighborhood and make your home less likely to be a target for criminals. It will show you what to look for, when to call the police and even how to make your home less susceptible to a would-be criminal. Any barriers

(physical, perceptual, or psychological) you can place in a criminal's path will lessen your chances of becoming the next target. The Neighborhood Watch Program will discourage criminals from considering your community as they select their next victims.

You can incorporate suggestions and techniques found here to better secure your home. Join with your neighbors and help each other prevent crime in your community. The Fairfax County Police Department is always available to help you get started and to assist your continuing efforts to deter crime.



## Report Suspicious Activity

You are the eyes and the ears of your community. What you think is out of place or doesn't seem right should be considered suspicious and should be reported to the police.

There are several ways to report suspicious activity to the police. You can call the non-emergency number, 703-691-2131 to have an officer dispatched to a specific location, or make a tele-

report through the police department's Citizen Reporting Service (CRS).

You can also make a police report online at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/police](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/police).

Remember, no matter how trivial you think the information might be, it could be the information that helps solve a crime.



*“Each exterior doorway should be lighted to prevent an intruder from concealing their activities.”*

## Landscaping

Keep doorways, windows and porches clear when planting bushes and flowers. The bushes, which provide you with privacy, also provide intruders a place to hide.

Well-maintained landscaping, fences and gates increase the difficulty of entry and deter the removal of large items. Walks and driveways should not offer concealment to intruders.

The appearance of a home and surrounding community will make a great difference in the overall crime rate. Landscaping concerns should extend to the entire community.

## Exterior Lighting

Exterior lighting is extremely important to residential security. Each exterior doorway should be lighted to prevent an intruder from concealing his activities. Use ornamental porch and yard post lamps as a means of eliminating night blind spots.

Yard lights and entrance lights can be equipped with sensors and timers which will turn the lights on at dusk and off at dawn. Motion detectors can be installed to turn lights on when someone enters your property. The lights will reset after a few minutes once the movement stops.

Exterior lights should be turned off during the day. Fixtures can be fitted with a light sensor adapter to make the light turn on from dusk to dawn.

If everyone in the community turns on their exterior lights, it increases light in the community by 30%.

For criminals, darkness provides concealment, concealment provides comfort and comfort provides opportunity.

## Interior Lighting

Maintaining an appearance of occupancy, even when your residence is vacant, is essential to thwarting burglary attempts. The use of timers to regulate interior and exterior lighting can create the appearance of the home being occupied. Timers should always be used when on vacation, when out to dinner or while you are at work.

The two basic types of timers are plug-ins (wall outlet) and hard-wired wall switches. These timers have a 24-hour dial and allow

you to set an on-off time to coincide with normal light usage in your home. Timers should be set up in a manner or fashion that imitates your movement throughout the house.

Keep your curtains and blinds closed. This prevents anyone from seeing what you have inside your home.

# Alarm Systems

Alarms are a personal choice. Many citizens wish to increase their protection by adding an alarm system. Remember an alarm is one part of a complete security system, it is not a complete home security system by itself. The following tips will help determine what type of alarm will best meet your needs for home or business. All alarms installed in Fairfax County must be registered with the False Alarm Reduction Division of the Fairfax County Police Department. You can visit there website at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/police/services/falsealarmandsecuritysystems](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/police/services/falsealarmandsecuritysystems).

## The basic elements of a standard home security alarm system include:

**Control Panel:** This is where the system wiring terminates, where the backup battery is located and where it is connected to the phone lines if it is a monitored system. Some systems can be installed with a cell phone system in addition to the standard land line.

**Keypad:** This is where the system is armed and disarmed. It is recommended to have keypads installed on the first floor and master bedroom.

### Siren or audible alarm

**Inside motion detectors:** These sense changes in a room.

**Doors and window contacts:** This sounds the alarm when a door or window is opened (and the system is on).

**A central monitoring station (company):** If the system is being monitored and the alarm is set off, the control panel sends a message to a central monitoring station, which is manned 24 hours a day.

Additional items that can be added to the basic system are:

Smoke Detectors

Glass Break Sensors

Panic Button

Pressure Sensors for under rugs

Closed Circuit TV, to allow monitoring and /or recording from inside or outside the home

Automatic lights for use inside and outside the home

- Any time your alarm sounds, the situation should be treated as if someone is in your house.
- You know your home better than an intruder—have a plan if the alarm sounds, get to a safe location and call the police.
- If you decide an alarm system is for you and your family's safety, follow the below steps to help assure that you obtain a quality intrusion detection system.
- Obtain detailed written proposals from any or all of the alarm companies you contact to install and monitor an alarm system in your home.
- Be sure to check with the Fairfax County Department of Consumer Affairs (703) 222-8435 for customer complaints against the company. You should check with the company to find out how long they have been registered under the present name. A company which changes its name often may be trying to hide previous complaints filed against it. A check can be made through the following web site at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/consumer.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/consumer.htm).
- Make sure the proposal indicates the exact type of coverage to be provided, the type of equipment to be utilized, the warranty for installation and equipment, and all costs involved including installation and maintenance fees. Find out if the company selling the alarm equipment will be the same company who will do the installation and monitoring or do they contract this out. We recommend the alarm company monitor its own alarms. A company which monitors systems it has installed is more likely to be responsive to customer needs. Any complaints of service can be directed to DCJS Private Security Section, 202 North Ninth Street 10th Floor, Richmond, VA 23219.

# Doors and entryways

Well-constructed exterior doors are probably a homeowner's best protection against forced entry; however, all exterior doors are not constructed the same. Some are constructed with heavy gauge sheet metal, others are thinner (both generally have foam filling the void) and still others are made of wood. When looking at a steel door, it is recommended that the sheet metal used in its construction is not thinner than 18 gauge. If you are considering a wood exterior door, it should be a solid manufactured piece and should not be hollow in the center. Horizontal and vertical stiffeners are sometimes used within the door to add strength. Steel doors should be reinforced at the lock and door knob assembly. This usually is accomplished with heavier metal plates within the door.

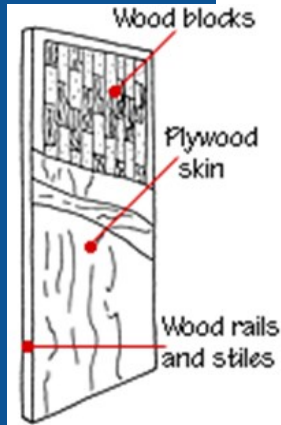
## Solid Core Door

This door offers the homeowner protection against an intruder when properly installed with good locking hardware. The door is often weakened at the point where the lock is installed. A reinforcing sleeve can be added to greatly increase security.

## Hollow Core Door

The hollow core door is constructed of wood framing covered by wood veneer. It has a hollow center or a center filled with foam or cardboard material. This type of door offers the least resistance to an attack. The door can be kicked apart to enter the premises. This door is intended as an interior door and should never be used as an exterior door.

Each of the components of the door system requires individual consideration. These considerations include the lock on the door, the strike plate on the frame, the frame, the hinges and the door itself.



“In case of fire or other emergency which would require quick evacuation from the home, everyone in the family should know how to use every lock you have installed.”



Storm doors and screen doors offer little resistance against attack. Most storm doors can easily be pried open with a screwdriver. Screen doors offer no resistance, as the screen can be cut or pushed out. These doors can be very flimsy in construction and lightweight. They will also not resist forced entry. They are intended to keep insects from entering the home and to provide an airspace for insulation purposes.

Sliding glass doors can present a major security problem if they do not have the proper locks and if special steps are not taken to prevent removal of the doors. If the door has a Charlie bar, it should be in place when the door is closed.

A sliding door is lifted into position when installed and, therefore, must be lifted from the track to be removed. To prevent this, it is recommended that 1 1/4 inch pan head (large head) sheet metal screws be inserted into the top of the door frame at both middle and the ends. These screws should be adjusted so that the door barely clears them when it's opened and closed.

Another method is to drill a hole, angled slightly downward, through the top of the inside door and into, but not through, the outside door. A nail or bolt can be slipped into this hole which will secure both parts of the door to the upper track.

A variety of sliding door and window locks are available. Some require keys while others do not. The best devices secure both the slider and the stationary doors. Even if you use the pin, a Charlie bar will provide a visible deterrence to a burglar.

## Glass vision panels or glass in the door

Doors containing windows or adjacent glass panels can be easily defeated by an intruder, who then has access to the locks in the door. These types of doors should be equipped with “captured key” or double cylinder locks (see section on locks) which prevent the door from being unlocked by an intruder while you are away.

The lock mechanism can be further protected by covering the glass with polycarbonate material at least 3/16 inch thick. Security film can also be applied directly to glass to protect windows from shattering.

The glass in French doors can be treated in the same manner as glass in doors discussed previously. There are additional measures to be taken with French doors or any double door. The inactive leaf on a double door should have heavy duty slide bolts installed on the top and bottom of the door. These bolts should penetrate a minimum of one inch into high-security strike plates in the header and threshold of the door. All slide bolts should be bolted through the door preferably over top of an escutcheon plate that wraps around the door to prevent splitting from a kick-in.

**Always use both the header and threshold bolts!**

## Door Hinges

Although most people don't give a second thought to the security options available in door hinges, there are door hinges available that can provide better security. Doors which swing outward have hinge pins are typically exposed on the outside of the house. This could allow an intruder to tap the hinge pins up and out, and lift the door off its hinges, removing the door without unlocking it.

## Peepholes

Peepholes, or door viewers, let you see whose outside without having to open the door. Consider installing a wide-angle viewer in your main outside doors.

Remember you do not have to open the door for anyone, just because they knocked on your door.



# Doors Locks

## Key-in-knob Latch:

Key-in-knob latches are not locks. They are not intended to keep anyone out. The knob can be easily wrenched off or the jamb can be spread to release the short spring bolt latch. Some manufacturers add security features such as anti-shim devices to the spring bolt latches.

Locks are designed for three specific kinds of installation:

- Mortised: Set into the door.
- Rim Mounted: Set on the interior surface of the door.
- Tubular or Horizontal deadbolt: Part of the mechanism is inside the door and part is outside the door.

*“Each of the components of the door system requires individual consideration. These considerations include the lock on the door, the strike plate on the frame, the frame, the hinges and the door itself.”*

Single cylinder locks are keyed on the exterior side with a thumb-turn operation on the interior surface. Double cylinder locks are keyed on both the interior and exterior surfaces. The ONLY type of double cylinder deadbolt lock allowed for residential use by the building code of Virginia is a “captured key” lock.

## Captured Key Double Cylinder Deadbolt

Captured key locking devices do not let you remove the key when locking the door from the inside. It becomes a single cylinder deadbolt when locked from the inside. When you leave the home, lock the door from the outside and it becomes a double cylinder deadbolt. This type of lock should be used on doors where there is glass in the door or within 40 inches of the lock. Most burglaries occur while you are away from home. Having a key in the lock while you are home becomes a fire safety issue. While you are away the burglar cannot simply break out the glass, reach in and unlock your door.

## Single Cylinder Tubular Deadbolt

The single cylinder deadbolt lock is key operated from the outside only. The interior operation is a thumb-turn. The lock is used where there is no glass in the door or within 40 inches of the lock mechanism.

The installation of any tubular deadbolt lock on a wooden door weakens the door at the point where the bolt is installed. A security sleeve may be needed to prevent the door shattering when kicked. The sleeve of metal allows for the lock and bolt to be easily re-installed over the sleeve.

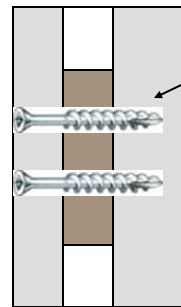
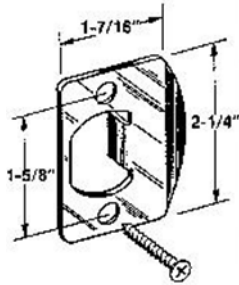
Rim or surface mounted deadbolts provide good security. This type of lock is also referred to as a vertical deadbolt. It interlocks, which locks the bolt into the strike plate.



## The weakest point of the door system may be the strike plate.

The strike plate secures the bolt when the door is locked. Because of the way the frame is constructed, the strike plate must be reinforced. The door frame is set into an opening at the time of construction, and after the frame is squared, there is air space between the frame and the door buck (the 2x4 next to the opening for the door).

With a reinforced strike plate, the door jamb is not likely to split if a door is kicked. To increase security, the air space between the frame and door buck must be bridged so the locking system is secured to a structural member, not the trim.



3" screws attached to door buck.

## Windows

Windows, like doors, provide an opportunity for unwelcome entry by an intruder. There are many different kinds of windows and a variety of security devices. All ground floor windows as well as those easily reached from the roof, porch, carport, etc., should be secured.

Basement windows are one of the most common points of entry for burglars. Often hidden by bushes or trees, this provides intruders with an ideal place to work unobserved. Such windows should have the glass replaced with Plexiglas or polycarbonate.

### Double Hung Sash-type Windows

To secure these windows, drill a hole that angles slightly downward through a top corner of the bottom window into the bottom of the top window, on both sides. Then place a dowel pin or nail into the hole to prevent the window from being opened. Open the window 2 ½ inches and re-drill the exterior frame, using the interior hole as a guide to provide a safe ventilation. Auxiliary latches also may be purchased.

### Casement Windows (Crank Type)

Casement windows are more secure than most double-hung windows. They are opened with a geared-crank arrangement and often are too small to allow human entry even when they are successfully opened. Intrusion is usually possible only after smashing or cutting the glass. Make sure the latches operate properly and there is no excess play in the crank handle. There are several different types of locks for casement windows. You should remove the crank when not in use.

### Sliding Windows

Sliding windows should be secured by the same methods used for sliding doors. Both the pan-head top screws and the bracing devices (metal rod, wooden dowel or steel pins) are effective on this type of window, if the slider is on the inside. Several types of auxiliary locks are available for installation.

Please remember you are more likely to have a fire than a burglary. In the event of fire or other emergency, bedroom windows should provide a means of ready escape. Keep this in mind for basement bedrooms as well.

**SULLY DISTRICT STATION**

4900 Stonecroft Boulevard  
 Chantilly, VA 20151  
 703-814-7000 Main  
 703-814-7018 Crime Prevention  
 e-mail SulCPO@fairfaxcounty.gov

**MCLEAN DISTRICT STATION**

1437 Balls Hill Road  
 McLean, VA 22101  
 703-556-7750 Main  
 703-734-0756 Crime Prevention  
 e-mail cpo.mclean@fairfaxcounty.gov

**RESTON DISTRICT STATION**

12000 Bowman Towne Drive  
 Reston, VA 20190  
 703-478-0904 Main  
 703-478-0799 Crime Prevention  
 e-mail RestonCPO@fairfaxcounty.gov

**WEST SPRINGFIELD DISTRICT STATION**

6140 Rolling Road  
 Springfield, VA 22152  
 703-644-7377 Main  
 703-644-5026 Crime Prevention  
 e-mail wspcpo@fairfaxcounty.gov

**MOUNT VERNON DISTRICT STATION**

2511 Parkers Lane  
 Alexandria, VA 22306  
 703-360-8400 Main  
 703-360-8928 Crime Prevention  
 e-mail mtvcpo@fairfaxcounty.gov

**MASON DISTRICT STATION**

6507 Columbia Pike  
 Annandale, VA 22003  
 703-256-8035 Main  
 703-354-5889 Crime Prevention  
 e-mail NW.mason@fairfaxcounty.gov

**FRANCONIA DISTRICT STATION**

6121 Franconia Road  
 Alexandria, VA 22310  
 703-922-0889 Main  
 703-922-8263 Crime Prevention  
 e-mail fracpo@fairfaxcounty.gov

**FAIR OAKS DISTRICT STATION**

12300 Lee Jackson Memorial Highway  
 Fairfax, VA 22033  
 703-591-0966 Main  
 703-352-2163 Crime Prevention  
 e-mail faocpo@fairfaxcounty.gov



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To request this information in an alternate format,  
 call the Fairfax County Police Department at  
 (703) 246-7562 and TTY (703) 204-2264.

# Crime Prevention Starts with YOU!

Let a trusted neighbor know you are going to be away and where you can be reached. Ask him to pick up your mail, packages and newspapers, and mow your lawn (in summer) or shovel your walk (in winter). You can also ask this neighbor to use your trashcans or set part of their refuse at the curb in front of your home on trash collection day.

Keep your doors locked and your garage doors locked at all times, even when you are home.

Have good locks. A high quality, one inch deadbolt lock on every outside door is a basic requirement.

Don't hide a key outside your home. Leave that extra key with a trusted neighbor or friend. If you have dead-bolt cylinder locks, you must use a key to lock the door and can't possibly lock yourself out.

Don't put a name or address tag on your house or car keys. That's an open invitation to an unwelcome visitor should you ever lose your keys.

Record the serial numbers from all your electronics, keep those numbers in a safe place.

Have a free home security inspection and be an active participant in Neighborhood Watch.

**REMEMBER:** A thief wants to take the path of least resistance. Your participation in Neighborhood Watch provides the most resistance!