

Myth-Busters Home Burglary

According to the FBI, a burglary occurs somewhere in the United States every 15.4 seconds. No one likes to think about being a victim of home burglary. Both the material loss and the sense of personal invasion can be devastating. Here are some of the most common burglary myths busted to help you keep your home safer from break-ins.

Myth 1: Leaving lights on makes burglars think someone is at home.

Leaving the same light on each time you leave the house is actually an invitation to burglary. Burglars get to know your neighborhood and your schedule. A light that stays on too long in one place is a signal that you'll be gone for a while. It's better to have lights go on and off in different parts of the house on a random schedule. Electronic timers are helpful and are available at most hardware stores.

Myth 2: Having an alarm sign or stickers will deter burglars from entering.

Having an alarm sign in your yard may help you feel secure, but it can also tell a burglar what alarm company you're using. Burglars can figure out how to circumvent your system by easily purchasing plans to different branded systems. It's better to use a generic sign, because a burglar cannot be sure exactly what system you're using.

Myth 3: I don't need my alarm on all the time.

Most people won't activate their systems when they are in their house. Believe it or not most burglaries occur when the victims are at home. The most effective type of security system is a zone alarm system that enables you to cover different areas at different times. A zone alarm system ensures your house is covered – no matter

where you are, in or out of your home. Also, many homeowners will fail to turn their alarm on if they're running out for a quick errand. But all a professional thief needs is a few minutes and he's in and out of your house with your valuables. You should always turn the alarm on – even if you just leave your house for ten minutes.

Myth 4: Cutting off mail and newspaper delivery while on vacation is smart.

It turns out that bit of contemporary wisdom is not true. Stopping newspaper and mail delivery is a signal that you are away. Burglars have been tipped off by people intercepting this information making you an easy target. It's better to have friends and neighbors checking on your house, picking up the mail and newspapers for you and dropping by at different times throughout the day.

Myth 5: A big dog will keep out unwanted intruders.

Not always true. A dog's bark is the real deterrent. Small dogs, such as such as a Chihuahua or a Schipperke, do a good job of barking when someone enters your property. Large dogs, unless they are trained, usually don't bark much – which is great if you want to get some sleep, but it's not so good for scaring off burglars.

Myth 6: A burglar will never think to look in my sock drawer.

It's best if you put valuable jewelry and documents off premises in a safe deposit box or a secure safe. Most people tend to hide valuables in their bedroom in standard hiding places such as the underwear drawer, under the mattress and closet shelves but these are the first places burglars look. It's better to scatter your valuables in more than one place, and to hide them in unusual

places, such as the freezer, or in a cereal box in the cupboard.

Myth 7: Sticker bushes in front of my windows will deter burglars from entering.

Many homeowners think thorny bushes in front of windows work to keep burglars out. Not so. A reformed burglar who stole over \$70 million worth of valuables says bushes that hide windows are a mistake – even if they do have thorns. Professional burglars usually wear gloves, and often wear two layers of clothing and many times they will also carry cutters. If they're determined, a few thorns aren't about to stop them from entering a home. In fact, it has the opposite effect, bushes can give burglars the cover they need to screen them from the street. If you do have bushes under your windows, be sure you keep them trimmed below the sills so they can't easily conceal a burglar.

Source: Bottom Line Personal, Winter 2009

