

HAVERFORD TOWNSHIP POLICE DEPARTMENT

1010 Darby Road Havertown, Pennsylvania 19083

Community Policing Unit

Crime Prevention Tips for Reducing the Risk of Crimes of Opportunity

Unfortunately, in the past few weeks, several of our residents have become victims of residential burglaries and thefts from motor vehicles. This is not to say that our community is under siege by a band of criminals, but to identify that our neighborhoods also can be vulnerable at times to these opportunist thieves. Although there are in reality, only a few incidents that have occurred, the fear and concern can be widespread throughout the entire community. Burglary and theft are crimes that citizens of all communities may face. Regrettably, these crimes cannot be completely eliminated, however residents can protect themselves and substantially reduce their risk of suffering a loss. It is only with this realization that our citizens can take the steps necessary to make themselves more aware and thereby less vulnerable. As the number of home burglaries increase, so must the personal commitment to prevent these intrusive crimes against our communities. The fall season time change brings darkness sooner.

This change may bring more opportunities to thieves, Today's burglars are brazen they operate openly - day or night. Burglars often cruise neighborhoods, looking for absentee owners or such telltale signs as newspapers which have not been removed from the front of the house or the newspaper box. Another favorite trick is the wrong number telephone call to find out if the owner is home before attempting to enter a residence. They often represent themselves as someone they are not in order to determine if the residence is occupied or not. Burglars may knock at your door and ask for simple directions or may ask you where a particular family may live. Quick thefts of purses or other valuables are commonly carried out by burglars who enter an opposite door when the resident is seen working outside in the yard.

Discourage burglars by following these simple rules:

Keep exterior doors and windows locked, even while you're at home.

In approximately 60% of all residential burglaries, forced entry is not used. Why? Because doors and windows are found unlocked! Install a one-way door viewer and have visitors identify themselves. A one-way door viewer is a simple, inexpensive safety device that allows you to identify the person at your door without having to open it. Never admit strangers under any pretext. Contact the Police to report solicitors or salespersons without proper credentials. (Township ordinances require all solicitors to obtain permits and register with Police prior to going door to door)

Use proper exterior lighting and keep shrubs and bushes trimmed. One of a burglar's worst enemies is light. Hiding places can be eliminated with proper outside lighting. In addition to continuous lighting, energy saving motion detection devices are available that will turn on lights immediately if movement is detected outside your home. Place a light over every door. Make sure entryways are well lit.

Mark your valuables with an engraver and keep valuables out of sight when not in use.

Utilize an identifying number that is unique to you. This serves as a deterrent to would-be burglars and it helps the police in recovering and returning stolen items. Serial numbers of all accessories should be recorded. Make a copy of your property identification list.

Always, keep garage doors closed and locked. Would you leave your front door wide open? Thieves know that many valuables are kept in garages, and quite often there is a door inside the garage that leads to the interior of the home. Take that extra second to close and lock the garage door. Install an automatic door opener to provide some added security.

Work together with your neighbors. When you are going to be away, tell a trusted neighbor and ask them to watch your residence. Communicate with each other; be aware of the neighborhood routine, call police to report any suspicious activity, vehicles, or people that may seem out of place. All too often the residents inform the police department of suspicious persons or vehicles after the fact. If you are unsure about something or someone, call the Police. It is always better to be safe than sorry. You can assist the Police Department by becoming an extra set of ears and eyes in the neighborhood.

When you're out...The home with a "lived in" or "at home look is a deterrent to burglars. Follow these simple rules even when you're leaving the house for just a short time.

- Lock all outside windows and doors, don't forget the bulkhead.
- At night, leave one or more lights on in locations not visible from windows.
- For extended absences, there are inexpensive plug-in timers that will turn lights on and off at times that imitate your living patterns.
- Leave a radio playing, preferably tuned to a talk show with the volume low. This will create the impression of conversation.
- Do not leave notes indicating your absence.
- Shut and lock the garage door.
- Do not leave extra keys outside; some burglars will look for them.
- Install an alarm. Many types of alarms are now available to help foil an attempt to break into your home - from inexpensive tabletop units to professionally installed systems. Some systems sound a bell or siren outside your home to alert the neighbors and scare away the burglar. Others alert nearby police or a monitoring station.

What should you do if you discover that a burglary has taken place? Get out of the house and call the police! The burglar may still be inside! If you discover that your place has been burglarized, immediately contact the Haverford Township Police via 911. Try to avoid disturbing anything (inside or outside) as you may destroy evidence that could be used to identify the suspects.

STOP THEFTS FROM VEHICLES

Don't be a victim of theft from your vehicle! Annually, there are 1.2 million thefts of contents and almost 1.3 million thefts of accessories from vehicles nationwide. **DON'T MAKE IT EASY FOR SOMEONE TO STEAL FROM YOUR CAR,** *Follow these simple tips:*

Try to park in well-lighted and busy areas. Avoid leaving your vehicle in unattended parking lots for long periods. Keep everything of value that you can in the trunk. If you must leave packages, clothing, or other articles in the car be sure that they are out of sight. Lock your vehicle up, be sure that the windows are closed tight and the trunk is locked. Mark all accessories such as radios, radar detectors, and speakers with an identification number that is unique to you.

No method is 100 percent effective against burglaries and thefts; however, by instituting these simple safety measures, residents can greatly reduce their chances of becoming a victim. If you need further information about home security, contact the Haverford Township Community Policing Unit at 610-853-1298 ext. 224 . Residents are reminded to report any suspicious persons, vehicles or incidents to police by calling 911 and requesting to speak to an officer to have the incident documented.