



THE CITY OF

# ROLLING HILLS

CALIFORNIA

## CRIME PREVENTION TIPS

**"Safe" neighborhoods are like unicorns - they don't really exist.**

### HARDEN YOUR HOME AGAINST BURGLARY



It's time to harden your house against burglary. We've had a couple of recent incidents that should serve as a reminder that even though it seemed like things had quieted down, they haven't. We all need to take personal responsibility for burglar-proofing our homes as best we can.

Rolling Hills is one of the safest neighborhoods in the entire United States, but that doesn't mean we can expect or demand a crime-free area. By far, the most common threat to our home is burglary. According to the FBI, a burglary occurs somewhere in the United States every 15.4 seconds. By definition, the crime of

burglary is a non-confrontational property crime that occurs when we are not at home. However, becoming a burglary victim can leave a family feeling vulnerable and violated. To avoid becoming a burglary victim, it is important to first gain an understanding of who commits them and why.

Burglaries are committed most often by young males under 25 years of age looking for items that are small, expensive, and can easily be converted to cash. Favorite items are cash, jewelry, guns, watches, laptop computers, portable electronics like smart phones, tablets, and other small electronic devices. Quick cash is needed for living expenses and drugs. Statistics tell us that 70% of the burglars use some amount of force to enter a dwelling, but their preference is to gain easy access through an open door or window. Ordinary household tools like screwdrivers and small hammers are most often used by burglars. Burglars continue to flourish because police can only clear about 13% of all reported burglaries and rarely catch the thief in the act.

There's no fail-proof way to keep out a burglar, but every little bit of deterrence helps. Even if you don't want an expensive security system, you can take a few minutes to make your home a little safer. Some relatively simple steps will greatly decrease the odds of a break-in, which means you can enjoy a bit more peace of mind. And isn't that what "home" is all about?

Let's take a look at a few facts:

- Once a burglar has selected a home to burglarize, most will spend no more than a minute trying to break in and less than five minutes inside.
- The point of entry is usually made at the rear or by a side door; the second most common access is via the garage door.
- Most burglaries occur during daytime hours when homes are empty, and happen to two-person households.

Although home burglaries may seem random in occurrence, they actually involve a selection process. The burglar's selection process is simple. Choose an unoccupied home with the easiest access, the greatest amount of cover, and with the best escape routes. Following are several easy and low- or no-cost things you can do to make a wandering burglar give up and move on to an easier target. Remember, even if you do everything suggested, it's no guarantee that you won't get "hit." It's just a list of ideas to help make your house less attractive to a burglar.

### HOW TO HARDEN THE TARGET

**Make your home more difficult to enter.** Most burglars enter via the front, back, or garage doors. Experienced burglars know that the garage door is usually the weakest point of entry followed by the back door. The garage and back doors also provide the most cover. Burglars know to look inside your car for keys and other valuables so keep it locked, even when parked inside your garage.

**Enlist local police** Local police departments typically can send a trained officer to your home to do a "walk through" with you, pointing out your vulnerabilities and suggesting simple fixes. Check your police department's website for crime statistics and tips. Remember to alert police when you'll be out of town—there is no charge for their Vacation Patrol, where LASD volunteers go to your house at least once a day and check all doors and windows.

**Chat up the neighbors** Neighbors update you on local crime problems and enlist allies who'll watch your home while you're away. Neighbors are terrific watchdogs. Ask them to occasionally park in your driveway or in front of your home while you're on vacation.



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CRIME PREVENTION TIPS CONT'D

**Burglars will bypass your home if it requires too much effort or more skill and tools than they possess.**

**Use your locks** Even if your neighborhood feels safe, make locking up a habit. Burglars often test a home by knocking on a door and, if no one answers, opening it. Keep every exterior door and window locked, including the door between the garage and house. A screen won't be effective; they are easy to quietly slice and reach through to unlock a door or climb through a window. Don't leave windows and doors open during the night whether you're home or away. It's a good idea to make a "pane patrol" part of your ritual of leaving the house. There are many do-it-yourself window and door alarms available that emit an ear piercing alarm to scare the intruder away and to alert you of attempted entry. Make sure your sliding doors and windows are newer, and designed so they can't be lifted out of their tracks. Put inexpensive wooden dowels in all the sliding doors and windows, so that they can be opened for ventilation, but not enough to let someone in, or enough to allow them to remove the blocking device.

**Fake it** Getting a dog is a great security move. But if you can't, pretend to have one. Buy a couple "Beware of Dog" signs at a hardware store and put them up. When a stranger is at the door, make a show of putting the "dog" in the other room before you open the door.

**Install dummy security cameras and paste a local security company's sticker on your front window** They know that most burglar alarm warning stickers are phony but usually move on to another home anyway.

**Keep the place looking lived in** Rotate lights on timers when you're gone. Get a neighbor to pick up your mail and newspapers; reschedule expected deliveries; get friends to drop by randomly to water plants or walk around.

**A loud TV or radio** can be a better deterrent than the best alarm system. If you're reluctant to leave your TV on while you're out of town, you can buy a \$35 device that works on a timer and simulates the flickering glow of a real television. Find it at [faketv.com](http://faketv.com).

**Trim shrubs** Bushy trees and shrubs provide cover for bad deeds. Remove or reduce hiding spots provided by shrubbery, flimsy enclosed porches, privacy fences and walls, or unlighted areas. Make sure all shrubs and trees are trimmed back so they do not allow a burglar to conceal himself while attempting to open a window or door. If possible, plant bushes with prickly thorns around these locations. They are a cheap deterrent.

**Remove anything that could help them climb to a less secure window or your skylight**, such as tree limbs or lattice-work - or standing on a vehicle, unchained patio furniture, or garbage cans to reach higher. Don't stop your security awareness at the outside walls of your house. Don't leave anything around the yard that might help a burglar get into your house. Ladders, stackable boxes or any garden tools should be put away, preferably in a locked cabinet. Many burglars have used the property owner's own tools to break into a home.

**Use your head** Don't open the door -- and don't let kids open the door -- to uninvited strangers. Stay home when workers are in or around your home. Don't put keys in obvious places like fake rocks and under pots and doormats. Train children (especially teens) to keep key locations and alarm codes private from their friends.

**Professional alarm companies** may charge little to install a system but they'll make up for it with monitoring fees. Some, but not all, wireless systems let you hire a professional service for monitoring, so you can comparison shop for price. Or monitor your wireless system yourself, through your computer or smart phone.



**Fly the Flag!** Professional burglars figure that anyone flying a flag is probably a Second Amendment supporter...and therefore has a gun...so the pros bypass homes flying flags. It's worth a try!

**Video Doorbell:** Never wonder again who's at your door when you install a video doorbell. Motion detectors alert you when someone comes into range and the two-way talk feature lets you converse without ever opening your door. You can do this at home or from anywhere in the world using your smartphone or tablet. It's convenience, security and mobile monitoring all in one. We got ours at [ring.com](http://ring.com); the Ring Video Doorbell got the best ratings of all the available choices. If you go to [ring.com/xm](http://ring.com/xm) (which we heard about on SiriusXM radio), you can get \$25 off.

**Trail and Gate Monitoring:** Block Captains always get asked if the criminal is entering via trails or through the gates, and why police don't check gate access records. The trails were monitored by camera during the last spate of burglaries, and nothing out of the ordinary was ever seen. Also, thousands of gate access records were examined by the police, and only guests of residents and vendors were listed. No one signed in as a burglar. That's why we need to harden our own homes against this kind of crime, because the gates and trails have not been the confirmed entry point in the past, and shutting them down is not the answer today.