

Top 8 Tips for Crime Prevention 2008 (#1 in a series)

Protect your home — from the outside in

The Calgary Police Service Crime Prevention Unit is focusing on residential security. Summer is just around the corner, which makes it the perfect time to Protect Your Home — From the Outside In.

“Residential break-and-enters reached a 15-year low at the end of 2007, and we want to make sure that they stay that way,” says Sgt. Mark Dumont, head of the Crime Prevention Unit. “This is an area in which police, residents and communities can work well together to achieve a common aim — not only is targeting house B&Es one of the Service’s priorities, it’s also something that we know is a priority for Calgarians, because it’s a consistent message in our Citizen Surveys.”

With that in mind, the Crime Prevention Unit has put together five tip sheets, one for each weekday of Crime Prevention Week, covering security issues for homes, contents, garages — even vacations and neighbourhoods. “Many crimes are committed by people looking for easy opportunities,” notes Sgt. Dumont. “If you take those opportunities away, you can help protect yourself and your property.”

The following Top 8 Tips cover some quick and easy ways to help protect your home from break-and-enters.

#1: Start outside

Look at your yard and neighbourhood areas from the burglar's point of view — they love trees, bushes and fences that hide them from passers-by, so trim back plants that provide those hiding places and consider a fencing style that offers a compromise between privacy and visibility. Pay particular attention to trees growing near your house. Could a burglar climb a tree to get onto the roof, and then enter through an unlocked upper-storey window? If you're in a condo or apartment, how easy would it be for someone to climb in through one of your windows?

#2: Show your pride

Keep your yard maintained to give the house a lived-in, cared-for appearance. Cut the grass, plant flowers, and remove dead branches and debris. This sends the message that you care about your home and your neighbourhood.

#3: Light it up

Install exterior lights to brighten dark areas around doors or windows to make them more easily seen by passers-by. Motion-sensor and photo (light) sensitive lights can be part of your strategy. Also make sure that emergency personnel can easily see your address from the street and back alley, even at night.

#4: Lock it up

When you're out enjoying your back yard, make sure that your front door and windows are closed and locked, and vice versa. Also, keep garage doors closed and locked unless

you're actually in the garage.

#5: Check your doors

Exterior doors and frames should be made of wood or steel, which are harder to force open than hollow-core doors. Frames in outside doors should fit snugly against the door. Glass in outside doors should be at least 1 metre or 40 inches from the lock or be unbreakable. If you don't have glass in the door, install a peephole viewer so that you can see who's outside without opening your door.

#6: Use deadbolt-style locks

Secure all outside doors with deadbolt locks (which require a key to lock and unlock them from outside). Ensure that the lock's throw (or bolt) extends at least 2.5 cm (1 in) past the edge of the door when locked. The strike plate is the flat metal piece on the door frame that receives the lock's throw, or bolt — it should be 15-20 cm (6-8 in) long inch with screws long enough (about 7.5 cm or 3 in) to pass through the door frame and into the wall stud. Hinges should be large enough to support the door, attached securely by screws that go through the door frame into the supporting stud, and not exposed on the outside.

#7: Double-check your windows

Take a close look at your windows, to see how they operate and how they lock. If any of the locks are broken or no longer work properly, replace them. To keep sliding doors and windows from being lifted out of their tracks, limit clearance by installing screws that protrude down from the top track.

#8: Putting it all together

You can take other measures to help you keep your home safe: Consider installing a monitored alarm system to warn you in case of break-ins, fire or carbon monoxide, for example, and remember that even when you're inside your home, you should keep your doors locked. It's easy for people to see inside your home at night when the lights are on, so keep window coverings closed during night-time hours. And always close and lock any windows that could be used to gain access to your home while you're sleeping — even on those hot summer nights.

For more information about residential security contact your Community Liaison Officer in your District.

Public Contact Information:

General Police Line: 266-1234

Public Email Contact:

cps@calgarypolice.ca