



Crime Prevention Information



Business Burglary Prevention

Perhaps more than any other crime, burglary is a crime of opportunity. Burglars aim for the easiest targets. Most will give up if they can't get in within a few minutes. To keep burglars away from your business - make their work difficult, risky, and low-profit. Start your prevention program from the outside and work your way in – just as a burglar would.

YOUR FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE – PROPERTY PERIMETER

EXTERIOR

Lighting is the most cost-effective deterrent to crime. Make sure to light all windows and doors, and work to evenly light the exterior. Make sure not to create harsh shadows which serve as hiding places. If your business is in a commercial area where lighting is poor, join with adjacent merchants to request additional lighting. For lights covering a street or public right-of-way, contact Kim Ambrose, lighting coordinator for the City (579-7553). For lighting to be placed on private property, call SCE&G (554-7234). There are minimal costs involved. Different lighting systems have different applications and benefits, call Crime Prevention for more information (769-7407).

Walls, fences, and shrubbery can have a place in crime prevention, but building a fortress may not be your best protection against crime. Secluded areas, invisible to passers-by, are a burglar's delight. He can take his time with little fear of being seen. The key is to keep trespassers out while keeping your property visible.

- DO use chain-link or picket fences.
- DO keep hedges at waist-height, no higher.
- DO use prickly/thorny bushes to discourage trespassers.
- DO trim low branches away from the building and lights.

- DON'T use "stockade" fencing.
- DON'T landscape with tall, dense shrubs.
- DON'T leave ladders or climbing devices around the property.
- DON'T leave loose tools or cinder-blocks/landscaping stones around.

Consider joining forces with neighboring businesses to hire a uniformed guard. If that is too costly consider watchdogs. Barking dogs are an effective deterrent.

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SECOND LINE OF DEFENSE – BUILDING PERIMETER

FROM THE OUTSIDE LOOKING IN

Burglars try the easiest entries first – doors and windows. Many are accidentally left unsecured. Others are pried easily. If yours are strong enough to resist for a few minutes, there is a good chance the criminal will move on.

DOORS

Doors should be constructed of metal or solid-core wood. Commercial properties should have steel doors with steel jambs.

LOCKS

The best locks have one common feature – a deadbolt. This is a steel bar extending 1- to 1½-inches into the door-jamb (“throw”). The dead-bolt’s strength depends on a properly installed strike plate to re-enforce the jamb. It should be heavy-gage steel, installed with pre-drilled 3-inch screws. Pre-drilling holes, angled inward, provides a good grip without straining the wood. Using Three-inch screws multiplies the resistance by gripping the studs supporting the door-jamb. A double cylinder deadbolt (key on both sides) prevents a burglar from simply breaking a window in-or-near the door, reaching in and unlocking the bolt from inside. It also prevents them from using the door as an exit if they entered somewhere else. Ensure that the lock-cylinder has a steel guard that is tapered and rotates preventing defeat by a wrench.

WINDOWS

Windows on commercial properties may be protected with metal bars, grillwork, or grates. Plexiglass can be mounted inside the glass, or outside the glass with carriage-bolts or uncommon fasteners. Edges should extend 1½ inches beyond the opening with fasteners into a solid surface, spaced 3 inches apart.

ALARMS

Consider these factors:

- Cost versus Need
- Value of your merchandise
- Burglary risk in your area
- Get several estimates

Alarm Types

- Localized – Alarm sensors activate a siren on- or in the building itself to alert passers-by and neighboring businesses/residents, and to cause thieves to stop and flee.
- Centrally Monitored – Sensors may or may-not activate sirens, but do notify a central monitoring company, who then notifies police.

Alarm Coverage

Different sensors are available to cover different needs:

- Exterior spaces (ex. lumber yards, vehicle storage, etc.)
 - Entry-points (doors, windows, sky-lights, vents, garage-doors)
 - Sound (actual microphones, sounds monitored at company)
 - Glass-break (sound-sensor for frequency of broken glass)
 - Interior motion (hallways, offices etc.)
 - Specific areas (safes, sensitive equipment, Air Conditioning/Copper)
 - Fire/Smoke
 - Chemical leak
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- ALARM FEATURES to REQUEST
- Battery Backup to cover line tampering or power outage
- Cellular Backup to protect if phone lines are cut
- Read-out to check function, track who coded-in, location of activation

If you do install an alarm, place labels on the property perimeter and at all windows and doors. This in itself may deter criminals (however, signage without an alarm is useless, criminals often test the system first for police response).

THIRD LINE OF DEFENSE - INTERIOR

INTERIOR DETERRENTS

Burglars don't want to be seen while inside. Your best protection is high visibility:

- Keep interior lights on – seen from outside by citizens and police
- Video surveillance - Recorded
- Wide-open spaces
- Low counters
- Uncluttered display windows
- Registers at the front, drawers left open, EMPTY
- Signage stating “No Cash Left on Premises”, “Register is Empty”, etc.
- Locks on interior doors, keyed deadbolts on exterior doors hamper escape
- Inventory and mark all serial numbered office equipment and tools (use business name or phone, owner's driver's license number)
- Keep detailed inventory of merchandise

SAFES

- A safe visible from outside means a burglar risks being seen trying to crack it. Bolt or cement safes to the floor
- Alarm the safe or the room if possible
- Round doors and combination locks provide the most resistance

KEY CONTROL

- Restrict keys to only your most trusted employees, or those with absolute need.
- Have keys engraved “DO NOT DUPLICATE”- most lock-smiths respect this instruction
- Maintain a key-log listing issue/return
- Label keys with codes instead of “back-door”, “office” etc.

PROCEDURES

Locks and alarms cannot prevent burglary unless they are used! All-to-often, investigation of a burglary determines that the point of entry was a window or door that was inadvertently left unlocked. Sometimes this is an isolated accident, sometimes mechanical defect, often it is a habitually unsecured opening. Some criminals have nothing better to do than to walk down the street and pull door-handles. Don't let them find yours open:

- Establish a routine for closing: check each door and window, briefly inspect the exterior, then set the alarm.
- Upon returning to open, again inspect the exterior for signs of intrusion before entering the building.

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HIRING – EMPLOYEE SCREENING

Many business burglaries are traced back to employee involvement:

- Carefully screen employment applications – ask questions, check references
- Criminal Background Checks – available at different levels from Charleston Police Records, Charleston County Court website (www.charlestoncounty.org), and SLED

IF YOU SUSPECT A BURGLARY

The burglar may still be inside, you may be in danger!

- Don't go in, or if inside, go back out and lock the door.
- Call police (911)
- Don't open for business, employees and customers can alter evidence

Free Security Surveys are available from the Crime Prevention office (769-7407). You may also print Business Security Forms from this website to complete yourself.

For more information on this and other topics contact:

Charleston Police Crime Prevention Unit
180 Lockwood Blvd.
Charleston, SC 29403

(843) 769-7407

CrimePrevention@Charleston-SC.gov

www.Charleston-PD.org