

HOME SECURITY GUIDE



San Diego County Sheriff's Department
Crime Prevention Unit

To the residents of San Diego County:

By definition, **Crime Prevention** is the *recognition, anticipation, and appraisal* of a crime risk, and positive action to reduce that crime risk.

The majority of residential crimes are crimes of opportunity, wherein the victims have left their homes or vehicles unsecured. The opportunity for residential burglary must be curtailed both individually and collectively through citizens working with local law enforcement agencies.

Many people who have never been a victim are often less than diligent about securing their homes and safeguarding their property. Unfortunately, thieves seek out these vulnerable opportunities, accessing homes and garages through unlocked doors and windows with minimum effort. Reliable estimates from reports and analysis indicate that the average burglary takes just three to five minutes.

The Neighborhood Watch Program is an integral part of keeping communities safe, and is endorsed by local and national law enforcement agencies as an effective way of reducing crime. We encourage all residents to consider starting a program.

This security guide was developed to educate the public about crime prevention techniques for homes and communities. By implementing suggestions in this guide and those from your Crime Prevention Specialist, you will significantly reduce your risk of becoming a victim. The success of crime prevention programs in San Diego County depends on the combined efforts of law enforcement and you. In tandem, we can reduce the potential for crime and create safer neighborhoods for everyone.





Introduction

Most people do not realize how easily they can become victims, or how easily they can prevent it from happening. By using prevention techniques to help reduce or eliminate the opportunity for criminal activity, a resident can enjoy improved peace of mind. By simply making certain that your premises are secure, whether you are home or away, and always locking your garage and vehicles, your chances of being victimized are substantially reduced.

The following five key components, when applied together, serve to help prevent residential burglaries:

1. **Surveillance** - the ability for people to see and be seen by day and by night.
2. **Lighting** – interior and exterior, on timers when it starts to get dark.
3. **Physical Security** – locks, hardware, and structural elements
4. **Evidence of Activity** – providing a sense of occupancy at all times.
5. **Neighborhood Watch** – Neighbors watching out for each other

Giving your home a sense of identity and uniqueness will psychologically inform any would-be intruder that he/she is on private property. This can be accomplished through landscaping and walkways that guide desired guests but serve as a deterrent to unwanted visitors.

Most law enforcement agencies promote the principles of **Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)** as the most effective way to confront crime. This environmental approach incorporates the above five key aspects into three specific areas of a residence, each of which is equally important to address.

1. The Exterior

Included in the exterior category are lighting, landscaping and house numbers. Adequate, appropriate lighting and a well-maintained yard creates an aesthetically pleasing environment while allowing surveillance, defining space, and guiding guests on to and out of your property.

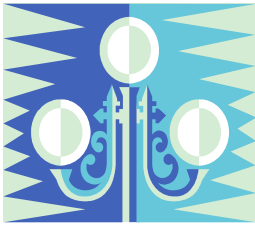
2. The Perimeter

Doors, windows, other entrances, and alarm systems comprise the perimeter features. The primary goal is to remove any opportunity for a burglar to gain easy access and to ensure that security hardware and devices are not only adequate, but that they are used consistently.

3. The Interior

The interior includes all interior factors such as lighting, timers, and perceived activity. The goal is to create the sense that someone is home at all times, as most burglars want to avoid confrontation.

By maximizing the security elements in these three environments and maintaining the concepts of the Neighborhood Watch Program, you will enjoy the benefits of a secure home and community.



Lighting

Single Family Homes

Light up the perimeter of your home during the night, including entrances, rear doors, and dark areas. Lighting is a deterrent for someone who is tempted to commit a crime. The best place for outside lighting is under the eaves, illuminating the walls, and by gates and driveways. Motion sensors are not as effective as dusk-to-dawn lighting as they can be set off easily and frequently by animals, thus desensitizing the residents to their activation.

Multi-Family Homes

In addition to the suggestions above, illuminate aisles, passageways, and recesses within the building complex with a maintained minimum of at least *twenty-five one hundredths (.25) of a foot candle* at the ground level after dark. Maintain a minimum of *one (1) foot-candle of light* on the ground surface after dark. To protect the fixtures against vandalism and weather, install protective covers. Ensure that surrounding landscaping does not obscure the lighting.

Foot-candles

A foot-candle is a measurement of light. To measure the level of light at the ground's surface, you must use a light meter.

Timers and Sensors

Install a timer or photoelectric cell (sensor) on outdoor light fixtures so that they turn on automatically at dusk and go off at dawn. Or, simply convert your wall switch to an electric timer.

Light Sources

Incandescent or halogen lamps live short lives and are fairly expensive to operate. The advantages are that they produce a bright light, are easy to control, and are compact.

Florescent lamps are less expensive to operate than incandescent or halogen and last longer. Though they put out a good light, they are more difficult to direct.

Mercury vapor lamps require fewer fixtures to illuminate an area, but have a shorter life. They provide excellent light, are easy to direct, control, and they are compact.

High-pressure sodium vapor lamps require fewer fixtures and have a low operating cost; however the fixtures themselves are expensive. They are an excellent light source, are easy to direct and control and are compact.

Low-pressure sodium lamps are the least expensive to operate. The fixtures themselves are expensive, but few are required. They are easy to direct and control but produce a yellow light-reducing clarity. They are longer in size. These yellow lights are often used to prevent loitering.



Doors

Wooden Entrance Doors

All wooden entrance doors should be of solid core construction and at least one and three-quarters ($1\frac{3}{4}$) inches. This also applies to the exterior pedestrian garage door and the door that passes from the house into the garage. **Security screen doors** provide excellent additional security when equipped with a good deadbolt lock.

Sliding Glass Doors

If your sliding glass door is not equipped with hardware that prevents it from being rocked off the track when in the locked position, install a slide-bolt lock at the bottom or a pin. The pin anchors the moving door to the stationary doorframe. Drill the holes and install the pin angled up to prevent it from being shaken out of place. **Caution: be careful not to break the glass when drilling the hole for the pin.** As another precaution, install an anti-lift device in the top track.

Security Screen Doors

Security screen doors offer good protection and allow for ventilation. Insist on the following features:

- Ring guard for the single cylinder dead-bolt lock.
- Perforated or expanded metal screen to prevent reach-through.
- Steel frame installed using non-removable screws or welded in place.

French Doors

Install a single cylinder deadbolt lock and metal flush bolts on the inactive side of French doors and a reinforced strike plate. The glass should be tempered or coated with a burglary-resistance glaze.

Single Cylinder Dead-bolt Lock



Equip all single- or double-entrance doors with a **single-cylinder dead-bolt lock**. The bolt should have a minimum projection of one inch and be constructed to foil a cutting tool attack. The bolt should be embedded at least one inch into the strike plate. The cylinder should have a cylinder guard, a minimum five-pin tumbler and should be connected to the inner portion of the lock by connecting screws.

Strike Plate

Screw in the dead-bolt's strike-plate using at least two 3-inch screws that go into the frame of the house and not just the door frame. The throw of the dead-bolt, when in the locked position, is embedded into the metal strike plate on the doorframe.

Double-Door Inactive Leaf

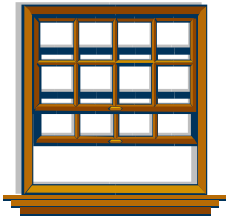
Provide the inactive leaf of double doors with metal flush bolts that embed a minimum of five-eighths ($5/8$) of an inch into the header and footer of the doorframe.

Viewer or Peephole

Install a wide-angle (180-degrees) peephole on all front entrance doors.

Out-swinging Doors

Use non-removable hinge pins or mechanical interlock to prevent removal of a door that swings open to the outside.



Windows

Regularly check all window security hardware and frames for corrosion and windows that have “settled” and prevent the locking latches from functioning properly.

Aluminum Sliding Windows

Inspect your aluminum sliding windows to see if they have a metal anti-lift strip in the upper track to keep the panel from being lifted out when in the locked position. If not, install metal screws in the upper track to prevent the windows from being taken out. To prevent the windows from being forced to slide horizontally, install an anti-slide bolt or a fitted dowel. You can also use a simple thumb-turn screw lock (the type that has a point at the end rather than the flat ones), drilling holes in the track to accommodate the screw for better security. Windows and doors left open for ventilation or for pets to access offer an invitation to would-be burglars.

Double-hung Windows

It is possible for a burglar to pry open the latches on the older double-hung windows. This type of window can be secured by drilling a downward sloping hole into the top of the bottom window through and in to the bottom of the top window and inserting a pin or thick nail. Check the latch to make sure it is functioning and locking properly.

Vinyl Double-Paned Windows

Do not drill into the vinyl frame of the newer vinyl double-paned windows as they are filled with an inert gas. In the likelihood that the seal would be nicked when the frame is drilled, the gas would escape and the window would begin to fog. Any drilling or modification to a “green window” would void the warranty. These windows are usually secure when the integrated locking hardware is used properly and are often equipped with “ventilation stops.” It should be stressed that, as with all openings, these windows should be closed completely and locked to ensure maximum security.

Crank Windows

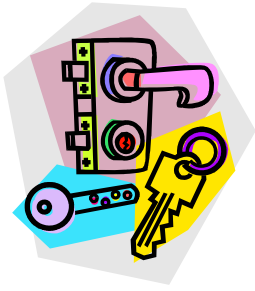
People who have older homes with crank windows should ensure that the frame has not decayed and that it is in good condition. The cranking device and latch should be inspected to make sure that it is functioning properly. The latching devices can be replaced with one that has a hole on the inside. Through this hole, a pin (not a lock) can be inserted to secure it in the closed position.

Louvered Windows

Louvered windows are especially vulnerable because the individual panes can easily be removed. We highly recommend replacing them for optimal security.

Window Coverings

Consider leaving drapes, shades, and blinds partially open during the daytime to give the illusion that someone is home. If you will be away overnight, ask a trusted friend or neighbor to open the window covering during the day and close them at night.



Security Hardware

Padlocks

Invest in a good padlock. Some padlocks can be keyed alike for convenience. The minimum standards for padlocks include:

- A hardened steel shackle at least 9/32 of an inch. Shrouded shackle and disc locks offer designs that prevent access to the shackle or hide it entirely.
- A brass keyway with a five-pin tumbler.
- Heel-and-toe double-locking mechanism.
- Laminated of extruded brass body. Combination padlocks are generally inferior due to the weakness of the body.



Some locks have a key code number that can be used to duplicate a key. Record and remove that number by filing or defacing it.

Dead-Bolt Locks

Equip all single- or double-entrance doors with a **single-cylinder dead-bolt lock**. The bolt should have a minimum projection of one inch and constructed to foil a cutting tool attack. The bolt should be embedded at least one inch into the strike plate. The cylinder should have a cylinder guard, a minimum five-pin tumbler, and should be connected to the inner portion of the lock by connecting screws. Do **not** use a double cylinder dead-bolt, as it can impede a quick exit in case of a fire.

Hasps

A padlock is only as good as the hasp it is securing. The hasp must be of hardened steel and constructed so that the mounting screws are concealed when the hasp is secured.

Chain Locks

The minimum standard for approved chain is 5/16 of an inch hardened steel alloy to withstand bolt-cutting attacks. The link should be of continuous welded construction. Alternatives to chains include multi-strand steel cables and U-locks.

Night chains that are attached to the interior of the door and the frame provide false security for someone who partially opens the door, which can be easily forced open from this point.



Interior

Lighting

Adequate lighting is one of the best and easiest ways to deter criminals. Your house should have lights on inside during the time when you would expect to be awake, even when you are gone. Put your lights on timers so that they go on when it is dark and go off around the time you usually go to bed. Simulate activity in the house by setting timers in different rooms (i.e. bedrooms) to go on and off throughout the evening. Do not set interior timers to stay on all night.

Timers

In addition to installing timers to activate lights, use them also with radios to simulate noise.

Operation Identification

Operation Identification is a program that encourages citizens (residential and business) to mark certain items with your California Driver License number. Thieves know that it is more difficult to “fence” property that has been clearly marked. Engrave such property as televisions, computers, small electronic devices, tools, microwaves, etc. You should never engrave valuables such as musical instruments, antiques, and items that could lose their value if “defaced.” It is also wise to video tape and/or take photos of things that you cannot engrave such as silverware, jewelry, crystal, and heirlooms.

Serial Numbers

For additional peace of mind, keep a list of all serial numbers from property in your home, and update it as needed. Keep this, and all other information about your property, in a safe deposit box. This is also important in case of a disaster, such as a fire or an earthquake.

9-1-1 Stickers and Magnets

Affix 9-1-1 stickers to all land-line phones or magnets to your refrigerator.

Can someone “window shop” at your house?

Make sure that expensive items such as computer systems, electronic devices, televisions, purses, cash, and wallets are not visible from the outside. Do not create an opportunity for someone who is walking in your neighborhood or coming to your front door. Especially during the holidays, decorated trees and displays of gifts are temptations that may prove too difficult to resist.





Garages

It is important to use maximum security techniques for the garage and to make certain that the perimeter is adequately lit. Do not leave your wallet and keys in the vehicles that are parked in the garage.

Wood Doors

Wood doors should be solid or have panels a minimum of five-sixteenths (5/16) inch thickness. Attach the locking hardware to the support framing.

Aluminum Doors

Aluminum doors should be a minimum of .0215 inches thick, riveted together a minimum of 18 inches on center along the outside seams. Attach a full-width horizontal beam to the main door structure, meeting the pilot or pedestrian access doorframe within three inches of the strike area of the pilot or pedestrian access.

Fiberglass Doors

Fiberglass doors should have panels with a minimum density of five (5) ounces per square foot from the bottom of the door.

Open or unsecured garages, either detached or attached, provide easy access for burglars to the garage and to the home. Multi-frequency electric openers provide excellent security for one-piece overhead garage doors. A gravity-operated dead-bolt can be added to operate with the opener. When you will be gone for an extended period, unplug the unit.

Locks

Doors using a cylinder lock should have a minimum five (5) tumbler operation with the locking bar or bolt extending into the receiving guide a minimum of one (1) inch. Doors exceeding sixteen (16) feet in width should have two receiving points.

For overhead doors without automatic openers, hardened steel hasps and locks should be installed at each side of the door, or a "cane-bolt" or "drop-bolt" should be mounted at the inside center of the door, extending two inches into the concrete.

Exterior and interior passenger doors should be solid core and have dead-bolt locks with high-security strike plates. Exterior hinges should be pinned. Windows should be covered and secured.

Sliding Bolt

Doors with sliding bolt assemblies should have a minimum bolt diameter of three-eighths (3/8) inch, and protrude at least one and one-half (1 ½) inches into the receiving guide. Attach the slide-bolt into the door with non-removable bolts from the outside. Use rivets to attach the slide bolt assemblies and use reinforced slide bolts with padlock covers to prevent burglars from cutting the slide-bolt or padlock from garages.



House Numbers

Single Family Homes

Your street address should be clearly visible in a prominent location facing the street so that emergency vehicles can easily see it when approaching your home. Consider putting the numbers on the front curb as well. They should be reflective and at least four (4) inches in height, and be contrasting to the house color. Landscaping should never obscure, either totally or partially, the numbers with landscaping, and should always be kept in repair so they are legible. It is important to keep the numbers illuminated at night.

Multi-Family Homes

A detailed, easily understood layout of the buildings should be posted at each entrance of the multi-family complex, showing the location of the buildings and units. Additionally, address numbers or letters should be displayed on each building and individual unit. They should be a minimum of four (4) inches in height and placed in prominent, well-lit locations so that they are easily visible to approaching pedestrians and vehicles. Ensure that landscaping does not obscure the numbers.



Miscellaneous Openings

It is also necessary to secure the less obvious openings of your home to prevent intrusion. What may appear to be an unlikely point of entry to you may be just large enough for a small adult or child.

Ensure that all skylights in your home are secured with one-way screws so that the unit cannot be removed to provide roof access.

Pet doors are especially vulnerable. Cover them with a tamper-proof solid piece of wood or metal or a grill. The use of pet doors in sliding glass doors is discouraged.

Crawl spaces, either from the garage attic to the house or from beneath the house, should not be overlooked. Window air conditioners offer easy access if not installed securely. Install with long “through-bolts” and round the bolt heads or use one-way screws on the exterior. Ensure that the unit itself has no “play.”



Landscaping

Landscaping defines and identifies your yard as your space, and also serves to help direct visitors and deter unwanted visitors.

Fencing and Landscaping

Prune tree limbs high enough to prevent passage over fences and eliminate thick bushes that could conceal a passageway in a fence. Thick foliage also reduces surveillance into a yard. Consider using a fence that you can see through rather than a solid fence, keeping in mind that the ability to see and be seen is integral in maximizing home security. It also eliminates one place for a criminal to hide.

Gates

Padlock gates that provide access into your yard. (See *Security Hardware* section). Gates that have open visibility rather than solid ones are most effective, and all gates should be illuminated so that those using them can be seen.

Roofs and Trees

Eliminate or trim trees that provide access to rooftops and balconies. Limbs near the house should be trimmed, also reducing clogged rain gutters and drains.

Trees and Shrubs

Keep shrubs trimmed low in planters and use plants below two feet in parking areas, not letting them grow taller than three feet. Prune trees up from the ground creating a canopy no lower than five to six feet, allowing vision through the trees and low-profile plants. Make certain that the landscaping does not compromise the efficiency of the lighting.

Entranceways and Porches

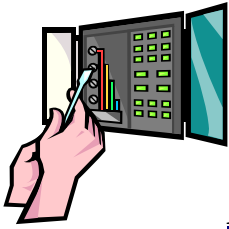
Keep shrubs low or clear them out of entrances, and trim shrubs away from address numbers. Remove bushes and shrubs that could provide a hiding area for a criminal.

Windows

Keep shrubs below window ledge level to prevent someone from hiding while tampering with your window. Consult a landscaping expert to make sure you are using appropriate plants. Security plants around windows can also deter a would-be thief.

Security Plants

Security plants have prickly leaves or thorns and can be used to discourage gaining access over fences and through windows. Use them in conjunction with fences to reduce concealment and loitering.



Alarm Systems

Alarm systems should be planned as part of an overall home security strategy. Keeping in mind that **physical security is the most important element** in regard to your home, even the most intricate security system will fail if the structure is left unlocked or the alarm is not working or activated.

Before investing in an alarm system, you should obtain at least three estimates and get ideas about what will meet your needs and lifestyle. Check with the Alarm Unit of the State Bureau of Collections and Investigations <http://www.bsis.ca.gov/> and the local Better Business Bureau.

Although there is no ideal system that can be recommended for everyone, a few basics apply. For instance, every exterior opening, including those on the upper level, should be alarmed. The system should combine perimeter and interior sensors and should have a battery back-up. Remember: *You want your alarm system to activate **before** someone enters your home and not after they are inside and walking around.* By concentrating on exterior crime prevention techniques, you will protect your interior.

Know How the System Works

Is it hard-wired or wireless-remote? What is the unit's frequency and what else is operating on that frequency? Does it use magnetic contact points on the openings, and which doors and windows are included if it does? Are there motion or noise sensors, and are you aware of common causes of false alarms, including insects and pets?

Become Familiar with the Features

Has the alarm company thoroughly explained all of your system's workings with you? Is there a hidden panic button or code? You should be aware that no alarm activation goes directly to a law enforcement agency, but rather uses a phone line to call the monitoring company. At that point, the company notifies the police or sheriff's department on the non-emergency phone line and waits for assistance. What about the maintenance of the system and a required battery back-up? If you are out of town and your system malfunctions, what plans are in place with the company?

False Alarms

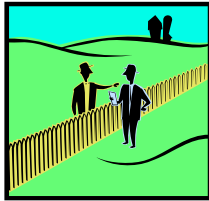
Having an alarm on your premises requires accepting responsibility for false alarms. Not only are they potentially dangerous and wasteful, they are subject to penalty fines. Last fiscal year (2007-2008) there were nearly 6,500 false alarms (*more than 95% of all "alarm calls-for-service"*) in the unincorporated areas of San Diego County, which does not include the eight contract cities within the Sheriff's jurisdiction. Check with the Sheriff's Department's Licensing Division or, if you live in a contract city, with the local government offices, to learn more about permits and penalties.



Neighborhood Watch

The fifth and final component to reducing criminal activity involves a concerted effort by neighbors to know each other and to form a Neighborhood Watch Program. In conjunction with the previous four elements, the concept that people who work together toward a common cause (i.e. reducing crime) who care about each other, and who know what normal activities take place in their neighborhood deter opportunistic criminals. They are aware of how and when to report suspicious activity to the Sheriff's Department.

What is *Neighborhood Watch*?



The success of a Neighborhood Watch Program relies on a team effort between communities and law enforcement. Enlisting the basic principal of sharing a genuine concern for each other and projecting a neighborly attitude makes it easier to address issues in your neighborhood.

One thing that the program is NOT is a guard duty. Participants learn how to proactively apply prevention techniques and how to report suspicious activity. The sense of community spirit and the ability to help reduce crime creates incentive to maintain the program and invite new members to join. It also encourages all residents to schedule a Residential Security Consultation with their Crime Prevention Specialist to assess security vulnerabilities in and around their homes.

Who Should Participate in *Neighborhood Watch*?

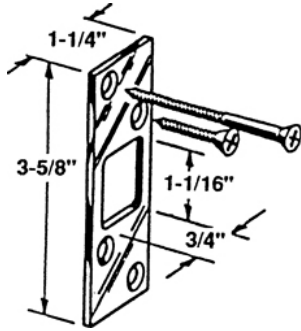
Neighborhood Watch Programs can be established in all types of communities where residents want to join together to help keep their streets safe. Whether they reside in areas with single family detached homes, multi-housing dwellings, mobile home parks, or condominiums, neighbors can share in the peace of mind that an active Watch Program can provide. The Crime Prevention Specialist at your local station or substation can explain how easy it is to plan one and will provide the invitations for you to distribute to your neighbors.

In order to be effective and to encourage the sharing of information, the Sheriff's Crime Prevention Unit recommends holding a meeting at least once a year. At these meetings, the attendees will learn about the latest crime statistics, crime trends, and crime prevention techniques. These meetings also often provide an opportunity to meet the beat deputy or hear a presentation on a topic that is applicable to your community. Many groups have a block party and potluck to encourage more people to attend.

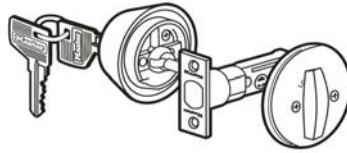
For more information about the Neighborhood Watch Program, please contact your local station's Crime Prevention Unit.



Examples of Security Hardware



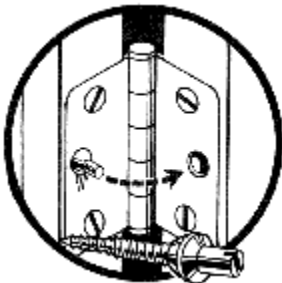
3 5/8 – 4-inch strike plate



Single cylinder dead-bolt



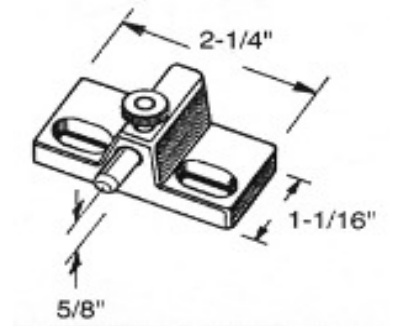
Disc lock



Security Hinge Pins
(for out-swinging doors)



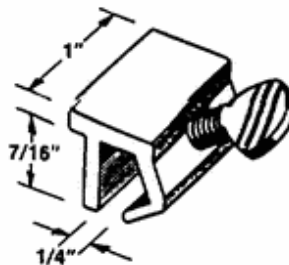
180-degree Viewer



Slide Bolt Lock (for
sliding glass doors)



Heavy-duty Hasp

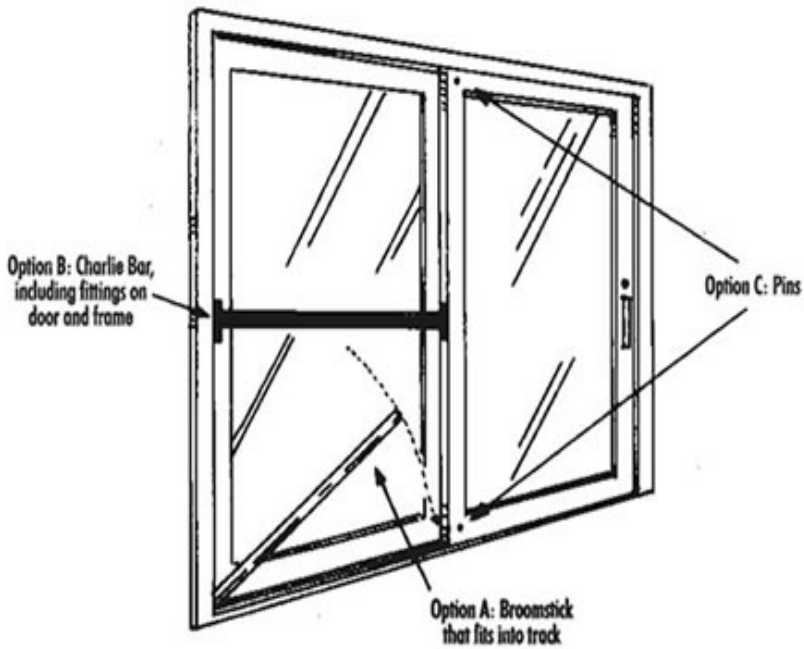


Thumb-turn Screw Lock



Security Closet
(convert a small room or closet
into a "vault" for valuables)

Securing Sliding Glass Doors

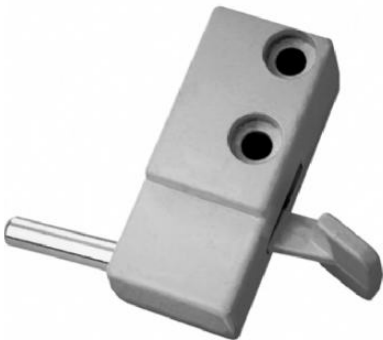


Pins can be used to secure sliding glass doors and windows. **Always consider an emergency exit strategy for family members, including children, and disabled persons.**



Note: Pinning at the top could potentially impede making a quick exit in an emergency.

Foot-operated slide-bolt



Install screws in the top tracks of sliding glass doors and windows to prevent them from being lifted out.



Secure all pet doors. Ensure that they are not large enough to access your home.

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