

HOME SECURITY INSPECTION CHECKLIST

Ensure Your Home Is Secure

■ WINDOWS

- Do all windows lock properly? Are they locked? Do the windows have plastic or metal locks?
- Identify all windows on the ground level through which a home invader could potentially fit. Is there anything outside the house that could possibly be used as a step stool to climb through a window?
- What's in front of the windows? For example, are they blocked by a table or other barrier that a home invader would need to climb over, or is the area wide open? Does anything block the view of the windows from the outside, such as a tree or shrubs?
- Are there alarm company stickers on the windows? New, fresh-looking stickers — not stickers that look like they were put on by the previous occupant — can serve as a deterrent.
- If you have standard-hung windows, do you have secondary security devices, such as bar stops? If you have casement windows, do you have standard or reinforced hinges? (Consider upgrading to high-security casement windows.) Do the windows have a protective laminate applied to the inside or baked into the glass?

■ DOORS

- Do doors look new, or are they old, faded and primed for a good kick? (Consider adding metal screen doors that lock.)
- What is the quality and strength of the front, back, side and interior garage doors? (It's natural to focus on the strength of the front door, but criminals will target whichever door is the weakest.)
- Are the hinges on the outside or inside? Do you use a deadbolt, chain lock or throw-over lock? (Consider upgrading to high-security door locks.) How long are the screws that are used to mount the strike plate? (You'll actually need to unscrew them to answer this question.)
- Do you have the ability to see who is outside without them seeing you?

■ LIGHTING

- Is the house well-lit or poorly lit on all sides? How about the adjoining neighbors' houses? Criminals will not only look for an isolated home that is poorly lit but also target dark homes surrounded by other dark homes. (Consider upgrading the home by adding additional exterior lighting.)

■ GENERAL APPEARANCE

- How close are trees or shrubs to the home? Is there anything that a criminal could hide behind while trying to enter a window or door?
- Do you have burglar alarm signs (in new condition) placed at all entry points?

■ ALARM

- Do you have a security alarm, and do you set it regularly? (Homes that have alarms are three times less likely to be burglarized.)
- Is the security alarm connected to an alarm service?
- Do you have motion detectors, glass-break sensors and sensors on the windows?

■ VALUABLES

- Do you hide your valuables inside the home? Do you keep jewelry, laptops and other valuables out of plain sight?

■ SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

- Do you observe your surroundings when you're entering or exiting the home?
- Do you proceed with caution before answering the door? For example, if you didn't order a pizza and a pizza delivery man shows up, proceed with caution, as it could be a ruse to rob you.

■ FAMILY EMERGENCY PLAN

- Do you have a family emergency plan in place? Take into consideration what each family member will do in several different situations — and make sure to routinely rehearse the plan.

