

A Home Safety Checklist

Courtesy of the Mission Police Department

(Check mark what you need to fix, and ask for help if you need it.)

1. Are there smoke detectors near bedrooms and throughout house; and are the batteries changed yearly?
2. Is there a fire extinguisher?
3. Is a flashlight handy? (Can you store one in every room?)
4. Are electrical cords in good condition? Are extension cords overloaded?
5. Are circuits overloaded with too many appliances?
6. Are electrical cords secured with tape (not staples) away from walkways?
7. Are light bulbs the right wattage for lamps and fixtures?
8. Are space heaters located away from passageways and flammable materials?
9. Do vented heaters have proper venting?
10. Are throw rugs eliminated or do they have non-skid backing?

Kitchen

11. Are curtains and flammable materials located away from stove?
12. Do you avoid wearing loose-sleeved robes or clothes when cooking?
13. Are stove and sink areas well lighted?
14. Is a portable fire extinguisher handy?
15. Is refrigerator food labeled and dated to avoid eating outdated and spoiled food?
16. Are dining table chairs sturdy? Do they have arms for support?
17. Are cleaning supplies and poisons stored separately, marked, and out of reach of children?

Stairways and Halls

18. Are there handrails on both sides of the stairway?
19. Are stairs, halls, and exits free from clutter?
20. Is lighting adequate, especially at top and bottom of stairs?
21. Is the edge of the step a different color?
22. Do steps have treads or non-slip surface

Bathrooms

- 23. Are grab bars installed in bathtub or shower, and by toilet?
- 24. Are there non-skid strips or a mat in the tub or shower?
- 25. Is the thermostat on the water heater set low enough to avoid burns?
- 26. Is the toilet seat high enough to get on and off without difficulty?

Bedrooms

- 27. Is there adequate lighting to get from bed to bathroom at night?
- 28. Are lights easily accessible, and is a flashlight kept at the bedside?
- 29. Is there a phone that can be reached from the bed and other main areas of the home?
- 30. Is smoking in bed avoided?

Basement, Garage, and Exterior

- 31. Are furnace, chimney and flues inspected and cleaned regularly by furnace experts?
- 32. Is a carbon monoxide detector present?
- 33. Are old rags, paints, and chemicals and toxic products stored carefully?
- 34. Is lighting adequate inside and outside, with exterior dusk to dawn lighting?
- 35. Are outside visitors visible through a peephole?
- 36. Is there a sturdy deadbolt lock on exterior doors?
- 37. Are porch railings and steps secure?
- 38. Are bushes too high where they obscure windows or doors?

Medical Care, Medications, and Emergencies

- 39. Does a trusted relative, friend, or neighbor have an extra key for an emergency?
- 40. Are medications clearly labeled? Have out of date medications been discarded?
- 41. Is there good lighting in the area where medications are taken?
- 42. Is a magnifying glass available to read medication directions?
- 43. Are medications out of reach of children?
- 44. Is information about medical help, doctor, hospital, pharmacy, handy?
- 45. Is information about your current health and history available for emergencies?
- 46. Do you have an exit or safety plan in case of fire or tornado?
- 47. Are shoes and slippers in good repair with non-skid soles?

Public Safety and Crime Prevention for Older Adults

Crime is less of a problem for older adults who are prepared for it. While most people live their lives without becoming a victim of crime, *everyone* should team some simple precautions to continue living safely, in the best health possible, and in a way where they can secure the money and possessions which they have worked hard to acquire.

Most of the crime against senior citizens is property crime or theft. Although there is always the chance of assault and more serious crimes, an abundance of information is available to help you prepare and become a less likely target for any crime.

Information and Preparation is the Key to Public Safety

In general, we may live in a safer environment than what we think. Preparing for crime is like buckling your seatbelt to prepare for an accident. Accidents and crimes are rare occurrences for any one person. But they do happen and can be devastating when they occur. Therefore, consider the following advice on personal and property safety:

1. Don't throw caution to the winds and live as if nothing will ever happen to you.
2. Don't overestimate your likelihood of being a crime victim and live in fear or never venture out in public. Do not let fear of crime stop you from enjoying life.
3. Learn and follow some simple crime prevention tips on a regular basis. Keep learning and stay involved with the friends, family, and law enforcement officials who can help you.

Protecting yourself from crime with a Personal Crime Prevention Plan

Answer these questions, make your plan, and develop a few simple safety habits.

1. Do you have and use your house lights and locks every day?
2. Have you looked at your home or walked around it to see what windows and doors are least protected?
3. Do you have emergency numbers, family and neighbors' numbers posted near your phone(s) or programmed into your phone(s)?
4. Do you protect your personal information from telephone solicitors?
5. Do you *plan your trips* to avoid dark, unlit, or isolated places or parking lots?
6. Consider the places you go on a regular basis. Do you park and walk in areas that are well-lighted and not isolated?
7. Do you protect your money, jewelry, and valuable possessions by not carrying a lot of cash or dressing in a flashy manner? If you carry a lot of cash or wear expensive jewelry, do you watch where you go and remain aware of your environment?
8. Do you always lock your car, check it as you approach, and have your keys ready for easy entrance?
9. Are you aware and cautious regarding strangers who are acting as if they were long-standing friends? Do you trust your instincts regarding people and situations?
10. Do you **keep** informed about crime prevention and public safety by reading, attending public presentations, or getting involved in neighborhood watch programs?
11. Do you have a plan which fits your lifestyle?

Think of a typical day in your life. In the course of a day, what opportunities do you provide for someone to make you a victim of crime?

Think of a typical week. Where do you go? Who do you see? Who calls and visits you? Think ahead. Talk about your activities and living situations with family or long-standing trusted friends. You may find you can improve your safety habits and make a difference in your chances of becoming a victim of crime.

Why not get serious about crime prevention? In general, criminals choose the easy victim, the best rewards from the easiest effort, and look for good opportunities.

Become an informed citizen, a hard target, a person who has thought enough to develop a simple prevention plan. Don't make life easy for criminals and hard for you. Don't let criminals be smarter than you.

Even though there is some initial effort involved in securing your home and developing improved safety habits...the long range benefit to you is increased safety and peace of mind when you know that you have reduced your chance of being a victim of crime.

You can enjoy life knowing that you have learned and developed safety habits that will make your home and life, even your community a better place to live.

Your Crime Prevention Options (Adapted from AARP)

Crime prevention is anticipation, recognition, and appraisal of a crime risk, and action to remove or reduce that risk.

1. **Remove** risks or opportunities entirely. Keep valuables in a safe deposit box.
2. **Reduce** risks or opportunities. Use alarms and security systems. Use lights and locks. Keep shrubbery beneath windows trimmed.
3. **Protect** yourself against potential loss. Insure property and valuables.

What's Happening in Your City, Community, and Neighborhood?

Crime and crime prevention varies from community to community. It doesn't hurt to be aware of what's happening in other places, but you should also find out about crime and crime prevention programs in your area.

Public Safety Publications & Resource Ideas

- Contact your local police or sheriff's department for Crime Prevention Information such as brochures, presentations, neighborhood watch programs, and crime statistics in your neighborhood and community.
- Contact the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) for publications on Crime Prevention at 1-800-424-3410 or check out www.aarp.org.
- Contact your local library or bookstore for good crime prevention books such as *Bug Off! 50 Simple Ways to Protect Yourself from Burglars, Thieves, Muggers, Con-Artists & Other Low-Lifes* - 96 pages by Jim Mantice
- Contact the Kansas Office of the Attorney General, Topeka, KS 1-800-432-2310 for brochures on Telephone Scams and Older Consumers, and Protect Yourself from Telemarketing Fraud.

Home and Personal Safety

Notes from a presentation by the Johnson County Sheriff's Office

www.jocosherriff.org / 913-791-5800

Overview of tactics to make your home a harder target for burglary.

1. Keep shrubs low
2. Use audible alarms or alarm signs
3. Keep doors, windows, and outbuildings locked
4. Keep garage door openers secured in locked cars
5. Know your neighbors and what they drive
6. Report suspicious activity
7. Car alarms make good home alarms
8. Keep expensive items in a safe secured to the wall and floor
9. Keep valuables out of places burglars look: under mattresses, closets, freezers, dressers
10. Cash is not usually covered by insurance
11. Keep a video log of your home and valuables
12. If you arrive home and it is not how you left it, do not go inside...instead report it
13. Use neighbors or "house watch" to monitor your home when you are on vacation

Dealing with and preventing home intruders

1. Do not let strangers in your home
2. Do not let solicitors in your home; or ask for a number you can call for identification
3. Use motion lights
4. Keep a phone near your bed
5. Have a plan and a room everyone can go to
6. Make your presence known
7. Personal weapons (guns, chemical sprays, batons/bats, and electronic devices) may help but can also be used against you or cause accidents.
8. Know how to safely use weapons you own and be prepared. Intruders may not be stopped if the weapon is not effective.
9. Consider family members and friends may be accidentally hurt.
10. Secure your loaded weapon and don't keep it in a bedside table or under the mattress.
11. The most common way for a burglar to enter a house is through an unlocked or unsecured door. Garage doors and back doors are usually the weakest points of entry and provide more cover. Don't forget to keep these doors locked.
12. Don't leave anything in your yard or in an unlocked storage area that a burglar

- could use to gain entry to your home. Ladders can provide access to an upper-story window, and some garden tools can be used to pry open windows or doors.
13. An experienced burglar knows where to look for a "hidden" spare key around your home. The best place to leave a spare key is with a trusted neighbor. A neighbor can help make your home look lived in while you are away.
 14. The majority of burglaries occur between the hours of 9 AM and 3 PM, when no one is likely to be home.
 15. Burglars don't like to draw attention to the crime they are committing and they don't like potential DNA collection. Sliding glass doors are a favorite entry because they tend to have flimsy locks that are easy to open. Take care to secure these doors by keeping a wooden dowel or stick in the track. The doors can then not be opened up from the outside even if the lock is broken.
 16. Once they have your name and street address, would-be burglars can easily get your telephone number. If no one answers when they call, they know that no one is home.
 17. Rather than leaving your house dark or keeping the lights burning all day and night, a sure sign no one is home, put your lights on timers. Photosensitive lights will turn off and on according to the amount of daylight. You may also consider putting the TV or radio on a timer.
 18. Having photos, videos and serial numbers of your valuables can be extremely helpful in identifying your stolen property. You should also engrave an owner applied number (not SS#) on any expensive electronic equipment.
 19. While it may sound odd to hide jewelry in the freezer or keep cash in a bag of flour, enough people do it that burglars will search all the usual (and unusual) hiding places. You are better off having a safe professionally installed in your home to protect your valuables.
 20. A burglar doesn't want anything to bring attention to himself, and barking dogs, both large and small, can draw attention.
 21. Never record a message on your home phone or work phone indicating that you are away from home. If a burglar obtains your phone number, it's an open invitation for them to break in and help themselves.
 22. There are many good reasons to get to know your neighbors, but one of the most important is to protect the security of your home and neighborhood. Asking a neighbor to keep an eye on your home while you are away is one of the simplest but most effective ways to protect your home from burglary. (Pick up mail, newspapers or fliers left outside)
 23. Studies have shown that homes protected by an alarm system have a significantly lower break-in rate than those without one. A prominent sign or decal indicating the presence of a home security system can discourage would-be burglars.
 24. A privacy fence can provide cover for someone trying to break into your home. Consider a fence that offers less privacy
 25. There's no telling who the previous residents gave a spare key to. Play it safe and have the locks changed.
 26. Keeping shrubs and hedges under 3 ft tall, and trees trimmed up 7 ft. from the ground eliminates hiding places for a would-be burglar. (3' - 7' rule) Remove tree limbs that would allow someone to climb to a second story. Planting thorny shrubs, rosebushes or cacti also discourages people from trying to break in through the windows.

27. Most burglaries occur between 9 AM and 3 PM, when no one is likely to be home.
28. The incidence of burglaries increases in July and August, when many people are away from their homes on vacation, or have left windows open for ventilation.
29. Most burglars gain entry to a home through the front door, often because it has been left unlocked.
30. Beware of dog signs, alarm signs, and Neighborhood Watch signs all will help keep your home from being targeted by burglars. In fact, just having signs or decals on the front of your home indicating that you have a dog or an alarm system will persuade most burglars to steer clear.

THINGS YOUR BURGLAR WON'T TELL YOU

1. I was here last **week** cleaning your carpets, painting your shutters, or delivering your new refrigerator.
2. Thanks for letting me use the bathroom when I was working in your yard last week. While I was in there, I unlatched the back window to make my return a little easier.
3. Love those flowers. That tells me you have taste ...which means there are nice things inside. Those yard toys your kids leave out make me wonder what type of gaming system they have.
4. Yes, I really do look for newspapers piled up on the driveway. And I might leave a pizza flyer in your front door to see how long it takes you to remove it..
5. If it snows while you're out of town, get a neighbor to create car and foot tracks into the house. Virgin drifts in the driveway are a dead **giveaway**.
6. Don't let your alarm company install the control pad where I can see if it's set.
7. A good security company alarms the window over the sink. And the windows on the second floor, which often access the master bedroom-and your jewel ry. It's not a bad idea to put motion detectors up there too.
8. It's raining, and you forget to lock your door...but remember: I don't take a day off because of bad weather.
9. I always knock first. If you answer, I'll ask for directions somewhere or offer to clean your gutters. (Don't take me up on it.)
10. I always check dresser drawers, the bedside table, and the medicine cabinet.
11. Here's a helpful hint: I almost never go into kids' rooms.
12. I won't have enough time to break into that safe where you keep your valuables. But if it's not bolted down, I'll take it with me.
13. A loud TV or radio can be a better deterrent than the best alarm system. 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.)
14. Sometimes, I carry a clipboard. Sometimes, I dress like a lawn guy and carry a rake. I do my best to never, ever look like a crook.

15. The two things I hate most: loud dogs and nosy neighbors.
16. I'll break a window to get in, even if it makes a little noise. If your neighbor hears one loud sound, he'll stop what he's doing and wait to hear it again. If he doesn't hear it again, he'll just go back to what he was doing. It's human nature.
17. Why would you pay for a fancy alarm system and leave your house without setting it?
18. I love looking in your windows. I'm looking for signs that you're home, and for flat screen TVs or gaming systems I'll drive or walk through your neighborhood at night, before you close the blinds, just to pick my targets.
19. Avoid announcing your vacation on your Facebook page. It's easier than you think to look up your address.
20. Leaving that window open just a crack during the day is a way to let in a little fresh air. To me, it's an invitation.
21. If you don't answer when I knock, I try the door. Occasionally, I hit the jackpot and walk right in.