



Securing for the Holidays

THE INCREASED RISK FOR BURGLARIES

BY BRIE
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In the midst of this joyful holiday season, there is excitement as people shop for gifts, decorate homes, finalize travel plans, and more. In addition to arranging many holiday activities, it is important to take the time to protect your home and community from one downside to the season—the increased risk of burglaries.

During this time of the year, there is a spike in scrooges committing property crimes and thefts across the country as they look for opportunities to take advantage of holiday preparations. To avoid becoming one of the thousands of people impacted, there are several steps to help protect your home, community, and holiday festivities.

One of the simplest ways to minimize a risk of burglaries in a community or at a home is to evaluate the landscape. According to the Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design guidelines, redesigning natural assets can reduce criminal behavior. This means keeping bushes and trees trimmed to create more lines of sight. When plants and hedges block the sight for homeowners or neighbors, hiding spaces are created for potential burglars. Be cautious with large holiday decorations as they can also obstruct views and obscure people with bad intentions.

A well-lit home, community amenities, and neighborhood can also deter would-be criminals. If you have made travel plans, consider setting your outdoor and some indoor lights on a timer. If a homeowner's yard or an outdoor community amenity is lit after dark, it will be easier for a passerby to see any suspicious activity. If indoor lights are on, as well, the home or building is less likely to be targeted for a break-in.

One of the easiest methods for theft, especially during the holidays, is snatching the online-shopping packages

and mail left on doorsteps. If you have plans to go out of town, make sure that your packages are ordered far enough in advance that you can remove them from outside before you leave. If you are not home during the day, or if a package is delivered while you are out of town, check with a trusted neighbor who can pick it up. Most deliveries have tracking numbers to help keep you aware of when your mail will be delivered. Motion-detecting doorbells are another method for homeowners to be alerted when a package is delivered or when someone is at your doorstep.

When opening packages or gifts during this season, do not put the



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A WELL-LIT HOME, COMMUNITY AMENITIES, AND NEIGHBORHOOD CAN ALSO DETER WOULD-BE CRIMINALS. IF YOU HAVE MADE TRAVEL PLANS, CONSIDER SETTING YOUR OUTDOOR AND SOME INDOOR LIGHTS ON A TIMER.

item’s empty box outside at the trash where anyone can see it. This can make you an easy target if you bought a new television, for example, and have the box in front of your house. Instead, cut the box up and put it in a dark trash bag or covered container. Thieves are often looking for an easy opportunity, not something that is hidden.

A burglary alarm system is another helpful deterrent for homeowners traveling during the holiday season. A notice outside may thwart thieves before they attempt to enter a home or scare them away if they do break in. A burglary alarm system can also notify you when something occurs while you are away.

Community amenities should also be prepared for an increase in burglaries and trespassing while many residents travel and the areas

are not as frequently used. For outdoor amenities, active video surveillance systems are proactive in deterring criminal activity during the night. With this type of service, remotely located guards or operators are alerted if someone is in the designated area after hours. A guard can then voice down to the trespassers or dispatch local law enforcement. Active video surveillance systems can also accompany burglar alarms in community clubhouses or offices. When an alarm is verified by someone, it is a higher priority for law enforcement response.

Finally, think before posting on social media. Although it may be tempting to share favorite gifts or travel plans on Facebook, Twitter, or other platforms, this is now another way for potential burglars to target a home. If a new, expensive gift is shared publicly on social media, criminals may view this as an opportunity. If travel plans including dates are posted, burglars now have easy information that makes a home seem accessible. Do not help possible criminals with a simple post.

While all of these practices and techniques can help protect your home and community during this season, they are also efficient methods to use or install year-round. While some proactively deter criminals and others reduce illegal behaviors, they can all help with peace of mind for individual homeowners and entire communities. Stay safe and keep your home and community protected to continue enjoying this holiday season. ■



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