



CONSUMER TIPS

INCREASING COMMUNITY & INDIVIDUAL RESILIENCE

SECURING YOUR PROPERTY

The material contained in this information sheet is designed to provide general information only and is not intended to provide personal or professional advice. Readers should not act on the basis of this material alone without taking appropriate professional advice relating to their particular circumstances.

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Break and enter remains one of the most prevalent types of crime in Australia today and one of the crimes of greatest concern to the general public. The International Crime Victimization Survey (ICVS), which commenced in 1989, reported data in 2003/04 from 30 developed countries, including Australia. In Australia, the prevalence of burglary was estimated at 2.5 percent. This was higher than the international average (1.8%) and placed Australia in the fifth highest position of the 30 countries. The 2005 Crime & Safety Survey, conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics highlighted that of the 7.8 million households in Australia, 3.3% had at least one break-in to their home, a garage or shed; and 2.6% had at least one attempted break in in the previous 12 month period. Law enforcement activities in each State continue to push the rate of burglary down each year. However it remains a significant risk for those who are unprepared. Insurers assess the risk of crime against your property and often offer considerable premium discounts, in some cases of up to 15%, if the property is protected by several key security measures.

What can you do to limit your chances of becoming a victim of a break and enter?

Measures required by most general insurance companies

Doors

All doors to the property should be fitted with a double locking deadlock, installed by a professional locksmith. In many locations the failure to have deadlocks fitted will mean that some insurers will not offer you insurance for your assets. Locks installed must be compliant with Australian Standard AS4145. Doors should also be solid core construction with a peephole and fitted inside a solid door jam.



Windows

All windows to the property should be fitted with a locking mechanism, installed by a professional locksmith. In many locations the failure to have window locks fitted will mean that some insurers will not offer you insurance for your assets. Locks installed must be compliant with Australian Standard AS4145. Glass in windows should be laminated safety glass.



Alarms

A back to base or monitored alarm is the best choice in the majority of circumstances and will attract the most favourable view of many insurers. In some locations some insurers will not offer coverage beyond a certain limit unless the property is protected by a professionally installed alarm system. A security alarm installed in Australia must be compliant with AS2201.



Window / Door Security Screens

Many insurers will offer further discounts if professional security screens or bars are fitted to all of the windows and doors of a property. Care must be taken with this installation in order to ensure that building occupants can still escape the building in the event of a fire.

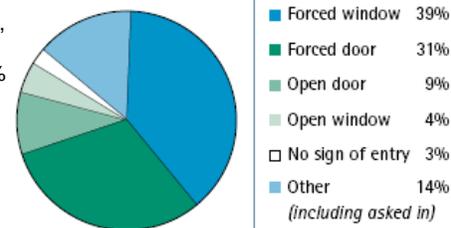


Your own actions are important too

Commonsense says that if you have security measures available, that you should use them effectively. Many break-ins occur where the occupant has left a door insecure, a spare key in an obvious location or a window unlocked. Failure to secure your premises can seriously affect your ability to make an insurance claim for your loss as, well as leaving you feeling embarrassed for not taking such simple precautions. In 9% of burglaries reported to police the thief enters through a door left unlocked.



HOW BURGLARS GET IN...



Other considerations to improve the security of your premises

Consider a Security Audit

Many locksmiths and commercial companies will carry out a security audit of your premises and make recommendations regarding any vulnerabilities they discover. You could also take a walk around your property annually with a friend or neighbour and ask yourself *How would we best break in to the property?* The purpose of not doing it alone is that your 'accomplice' might spot things that you overlook. Return the favour for your neighbour and then consult a professional tradesman to rectify any vulnerabilities that you discover. Many law enforcement agencies in Australia have information available to help you perform your own security preparation- [Click here for an online example](#)

Gardens & External Fittings

Make sure that gardens are clean and tidy and do not create areas that would help screen a theft whilst in the act of breaking in. Make sure that trees, lattice and external fittings to the property are not providing a convenient ladder for a thief to access an upstairs window. Make sure that all fences and gates are in good working order to deter unauthorised access to your property. Make sure that your power meter is contained in a solid metal cabinet and is secured by an electricity authority lock to resist tampering.

Lighting

Make sure that external areas are well lit by quality security lighting and where possible they should be activated by movement. Areas around doors and windows should be especially well lit.

Ladders & Tools

Secure all ladders and tools normally kept around your home, that a thief may use to help gain entry to your property.

Know your neighbours

A positive relationship with your neighbours is important. Neighbours who are aware of what is normal in their neighbourhood will be quick to spot a thief or respond to unusual noise. Consider joining neighbourhood watch www.neighbourhoodwatch.com.au

When away for extended periods

Thieves are experts at picking a home where nobody is present, 70% of thefts occur when the owner is absent. Don't make it obvious when you leave the house for extended periods, like holidays. There are many things that you can do to make the house appear occupied, such as arranging for your bins to be taken in and out, your mail collected and devices set on automatic timers. See your local police service website for more information.

1. Always lock up. Don't overlook the obvious. Doors and windows should be locked, not only when we leave the house, but when we are elsewhere in the house, on the phone, in the garden, or otherwise preoccupied, away from points of entry.

2. Cut away the camouflage. Cultivate a garden, but not a burglars' paradise. Burglars love camouflage. Site trees, shrubs, walls and fences so an intruder can be clearly seen in your front or back yard, and keep bushes around doors and windows trimmed.

3. Deadlock the main door. The main door is the most likely point of entry and should be your first priority. A key-operated deadlock on a solid timber door is the safest option. If intruders get into your house through another entry, a key operated deadlock on the main door will make it more difficult for them to carry stolen goods out. Reinforce the deadlock wherever possible with a security screen, and a peephole, so you get to see any visitors before they see you.

4. Synchronise Door Locks. Install the same key-operated lock system on all other doors - it makes locking up and owner entry easier. Security firms can install tamper-proof locks. Sliding glass doors are particularly vulnerable and should be bolted top and bottom or fitted with a specifically designed deadlock.

5. Secure all windows. No windows are too high or too small for burglars. All windows should be secured with keyed locks or security grills. Do not resort to a piece of dowel in the window track, and lock all upper-level windows, they are easier to reach than you think.

6. Light up at night. Keep doors, windows, and pathways well-lit at night. Movement activated sensor lights are highly recommended.

7. Lock the side gates. Side gates are easily overlooked. They should also be securely locked, and children and grandchildren educated to always lock the gates behind them.

8. Co-opt a canine. Consider keeping a dog. Even if you don't own one, think about hanging a 'beware of the dog' sign at any outside gates. If burglars are casing the place, the prospect of a burglar-unfriendly dog can be good enough reason for many to beat a retreat.

9. Install burglar alarms. The best alarms to complement other forms of household security are highly visible, audible, back-to-base alarms linked to a security service that monitors and responds to their call.

10. Lock up the meter box. Locking up your meter box prevents thieves interfering with your power supply or security sensor light system. (Consult electricity authorities or local councils for further information.)

11. Padlock garden sheds and garages. Sheds and garages are usually the repository of tools and other implements burglars use to assist in a break-in. Keep them padlocked. If there is a connecting door between the garage and your house, ensure it is always locked.

12. Plan ahead for absences or holidays. An empty house invites burglars. Never leave your house obviously unoccupied, even briefly. Install timer devices that turn lights and radios on and off at night, and outside sensors that are movement-activated. Arrange for neighbours or friends to clear out your letterbox and park a car in your driveway occasionally. Cancel all deliveries. Lock away the wheelie bin. (Thieves like wheelies to wheel away their loot.) Turn the volume down on your answering machine.

13. Prepare for an emergency. Ensure your house number is clearly visible. If you have to call police or other emergency services, they should be able to find your house quickly. Programme telephone numbers for emergency services, close friends, relatives or neighbours into your telephone's memory so that in a state of emergency you can summon assistance quickly.

