

## Home Security Assessment

### *Home security checklist:*

Walk around your home from the outside. If you wanted to break in, how would you do it? If you'd watched your home/apartment/condo for a few weeks, when would you do it? Think about this from the standpoint of someone who wants your stuff and therefore has no desire to confront you. Then consider it from the standpoint of Ted Bundy, American asshole. Make some notes and think about them, then use this checklist to assess weak points and address them.

### **Doors**

Doors are the first entry point into your home for intruders. If you don't have solid doors, invest in dead bolts that extend into the frame (most residential dead bolts anchor only to the strike plate and can be kicked in by a fairly determined preteen. Be aware that most common locks installed in homes are easily picked. Consider brands that emphasize their security over convenience. If your doors are not solid, consider having a floor-mounted security doorstop installed.

- Are exterior doors solid wood or reinforced metal so they can withstand battering?
- Does your front door have a dead bolt separate from the key lock?
- Does the front door dead bolt extend three inches (eight centimeters) into the frame of the structure?
- Check other exterior doors for the same.

- If you have a garage, is the door leading inside solid and does it have a dead bolt?
- If there are windows within forty inches (100 cm) of your front door, you need to consult a locksmith about installing double-cylinder-style dead bolts to prevent reach-arounds.
- If you have sliding glass doors to a patio, are they double-locked?
- Are doorways well lit so intruders are exposed if they're attempting to gain entry?
- Do you have peepholes or windows that allow you to see who's at the front door?
- If you have a garage door, can it be forced open, either by overcoming the opener motor or because you don't have one?
- Does your garage door with opener have a lock that overrides the openers? (Most openers now have rolling codes, but if yours doesn't, you need to know the code can be captured.)

## **Windows**

Every window should be considered as a vulnerability, sometimes from as unexpected a source as the neighboring apartment. If windows are reachable from the ground, the roof, a ladder, or even a tree, that must be addressed. Most residential window locks are not heavy duty and can be jimmied or overcome.

- Do entry-vulnerable windows have solid locks? Or can you overcome/defeat them by pushing with determination? (Don't break

your window locks, but when you do this test, ask yourself, *could* you do it?)

- Do you have window air conditioners that could be removed and then the opening climbed through or the window opened by reaching around?
- Is your original Van Gogh or priceless unicorn figurine collection visible from the outside? If so, consider how to mask or place them so they don't serve as enticements.

*Other exterior considerations:*

- Do you have motion sensor lights?
- Are there timed lights that illuminate areas of vulnerability?
- Do you have a spare key hidden someplace stupid? (Sorry, but if you have it under the mat, above the jamb, or in that lone obviously fake rock, you're asking for your unicorn figurines to be lifted.)
- Do you have a security system? Is it truly monitored? If so, have you tested it? Do they respond or do the cops show up? (You can always claim ignorance, but the peace of mind is worth the false alarm. Just don't tell them I said so.)
- Is there a crawl space or floor-level gap or even a basement entry area that makes your home vulnerable?

*Door, window, and exterior notes:*

Sliding and standard windows can be easily and cheaply reinforced using  $\frac{3}{4}$ " or 1" wooden dowels obtained from any home supply store. If you measure them, they'll often cut them to length for free. A trick I like to use if you need that window or sliding door to be open a few inches or centimeters for ventilation is to have them cut that much off the total length. When you want the door or window open, simply remove the short piece and voilà! You're ventilated and secure. Simply replace the short piece when you want to close and lock up.

Sliding doors can also be secured in the ventilation open position with pins that are drilled through the frame and slide. However, if you have this done, it needs to be at the far end of the door away from the opening to prevent reach-arounds.

Do you have a trusted neighbor for a spare key? If not, you need to spend some time on a quality place to hide one. One of my favorites was a false pop-up sprinkler that you placed in the ground.

For viewing your front and back entries, consider Ring or another company that provides the ability to observe who's around or has been there, while you're at home or remotely. Do not scrimp with this and remember, they too can be hacked.

If you don't have a security system (or don't live in a doorman-manned apartment in Manhattan), get one. If you can't afford one, get a sign. You're not here to play fair.

It should go without saying but...do you lock or secure doors and windows and other vulnerable entry points every time you leave or go to bed? If not, hello Ted...