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QUARTERLY COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

PROTECTING YOUR HOME

When was the last time you heard about a home being burglarized? It seems to be happening more often now, doesn't it? Maybe you have been hit yourself. Not a good feeling, is it?

You don't have to be a victim of burglary. While it is one of the most frequently committed crimes, it's preventable. Most home burglaries are done by opportunists who spot an open window, a faulty lock, a poorly lighted area or a house that looks like no one is going to be around for a while. In California, nearly one half of all burglaries are classified as "no-force entries" because the burglars simply walk through an unlocked door or climbs in an open window.

You can reduce the chance of this happening to you. A few low-cost modifications or changes and some forethought and planning can add to your peace of mind and safeguard your property. We call it target hardening your home.

Remember that no house is absolutely burglarproof. If a determined burglar really wants something you have, he or she will find a way to get it. However, for the average opportunist burglar, you can target-harden your home by:

- 1) Making it difficult to break in.
- 2) Slowing the burglary down so the job would become tedious and frustrating.
- 3) Implementing methods to detect and catch the burglar in the act.

Faced by all these obstacles, the opportunist will simply walk away and look for an easier opportunity.

The following checklist will help you systematically survey your home. Every "No" answer shows a weakness the burglar could use to enter your home.

1. DOORS AND ENTRY AREAS

- Do keep your doors locked when you are in your house?
- Do you have a plan so you do not need to "hide" a key under the door mat, in the flower pot, above the porch light, or similar places?

- Do you know everyone who has a key to your home? (Or are keys still in the possession of a previous owner and their friends or yours?)
- Are your entry areas obstructed by shrubbery and other decor to obscure maximum visibility?
- Are your trees and shrubs trimmed to eliminate or reduce hiding places?
- Are lights installed around the perimeters of your house and garage?
- Do the front, back, or side porch lights produce a minimum of 60 watts of power?
- Are your exterior doors steel clad or of solid core construction?
- Do your entry doors have 180° wide angle viewers? Are they positioned so you can use them?
- Do your exterior doors have cylinder-type dead bolt locks with at least one and a half to two inch throws?
- Do your exterior doors without cylinder locks have heavy bolts or some similarly secure devices that can be operated only from the inside?
- Can all doors - porch, French or balcony - be securely locked?
- Are all your locks in good repair?
- Are the door strike plates (the jamb fastening that receives the bolt in the locking position) installed with three inch screws?
- Do all out-swinging doors have locking pins or nonremovable hinges with pins?
- Do sliding doors have auxiliary locks that lock both door panels together? Or do you have a lock that locks the active side of the frame?
- Is your garage door secured with a padlock, hasp, or other good auxiliary lock? And do you use it?
- Do you lock your garage door at night?
- Do you lock your garage door when you are away from home?
- Do you lock your garage door leading into the house?
- Do you lock your car and take the keys out even when it is parked in your garage or driveway?

2. WINDOWS

- Are all windows equipped with auxiliary locks and/or pins?
- Have you replaced or secured louvered windows?
- Are your window locks properly and securely mounted?
- Do you keep your windows locked when they are shut?
- Do you have good secure locks on your garage windows?
- Do you have garage windows covered with curtains or blinds?
- Are you as careful of basement and second floor windows as you are of those on the first floor?

3. WHEN YOU ARE ON A TRIP

- Do you arrange for neighbors or friends to pick up newspapers, mail, packages, and other deliveries?
- Do you notify a neighbor?
- Do you notify the Hemet Police Department and request a vacation check of your home?
- Do you arrange to keep your lawn maintained?
- Do you use timing devices to turn your lamps, radios, or televisions on and off?
- Do you arrange to have a neighbor put out your garbage or trash can and put it back in the yard?
- Do you have a Neighborhood Watch Group on your street?

PROTECTING YOUR VEHICLE

Car theft is always a problem and a difficult crime to solve. Vehicles are generally stolen at night when there are usually no witnesses and the criminals take the evidence with them. Considering that, law enforcement does a remarkable job of recovery.

Many of the recovered vehicles no longer resemble the vehicles that were stolen. This is because vehicles are stolen for various reasons (and recovered in various ways). Sometimes they are stolen just for the transportation, to get from point A to point B. Sometimes it's for the vehicle's parts. This is especially true of vehicles that are four-plus years old. The sum (\$) total of the parts may be worth more than the whole car put together. Sometimes, vehicles are stolen for pure profit and quickly driven across the border or to the nearest harbor for shipment overseas. Sometimes vehicles are stolen to commit another crime. Regardless of why it is stolen, if you lose your vehicle, call 9-1-1 IMMEDIATELY!

The circumstances surrounding the recovery may dictate the condition of the returning vehicle. If there was a car chase or if the bad guys crashed the car, or if the car was stripped of its parts, the returned vehicle may well be a total loss. To avoid this possible catastrophe, there are precautions you can take to protect your vehicle beginning with target hardening.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO TARGET HARDEN YOUR VEHICLE

1. Your vehicle's keys are your first line of defense.
 - When you are in your car or out of it, keep your windows up and your doors locked.
 - When parking your car, lock your doors and your windows and TAKE YOUR KEYS WITH YOU. About 50% of all cars stolen are unlocked.
 - Never leave a spare key hidden inside your car. Crooks count on this and they know all the hiding places.
 - Carry only the keys you need when you are away from home. Keep your car key and your house key on separate, unlabeled rings or chains.
 - When at a car wash, at an attended parking lot, or using valet parking services, give the attendant only the ignition key.
 - Remember the old Persian proverb: Trust in God, but tie your camel tight.

2. Parking your car:
 - If you have a garage, use it. Park and lock your car and then lock your garage.
 - Engage all anti-theft devices that came with the car from the manufacturer.

You may wish to consider installing other or additional anti-theft devices. There are many such products on the market. Consult your auto dealer, mechanic or auto parts store. Remember, any security system can be defeated if the crook knows it's there. Therefore, do not put stickers on your windows as they only advertise your new security addition.

- When out and about and ready to park, choose a spot near an open business, in a well lighted street or parking area. Avoid dark streets, alleyways and isolated areas.
 - Turn your wheels sharply to the right or to the left and apply the parking brake to make it harder to tow your car away.
 - Remember where you leave your car by noting landmarks, street names, and/or counting spaces or rows.
 - While the engine is running, never leave your car unattended to do things like: pay for gas, make a quick telephone call or "only be gone for a minute". It only takes seconds to steal a car if the engine is already running.
3. When you are ready to return to your parked car, before you leave the shelter of a building or a group of people, have your car key in your hand. Walk directly to your car. Be aware of who is around you. If for any reason you feel uncomfortable, return immediately to the building or group of people you left. Ask for help. Always trust your instincts. When you arrive safely at your car, open the door, enter, lock your door, fasten your seatbelt, check your mirrors, start the engine and drive away. Leave the premises. This is no time to check your purchases or make a phone call. While you are distracted, you are not aware of what is happening around you. That puts you in a vulnerable position.
- To avoid breakdowns, always keep your car in good operating condition. If you break down on a street, refuse help from strangers. Call or go for help from people you trust. If you break down on the freeways, park as safely as you can away from traffic and turn on your flashers. If you can see a call box from your car, carefully walk there to use it. Otherwise, stay in your car until a law enforcement officer finds you. Cell phones and/or CB radios are very useful in an emergency. Note: calls on cell phones are sometimes lost. Give the 9-1-1 operator your telephone number so they can call you back if you are disconnected.
4. The same Operation I.D. program you use to identify your household valuables can be used in your car. Engrave your California license number on such things as your

tape deck, bucket seats, hub caps, etc. to make them less desirable for resale.

5. To protect your license plate from being stolen, place a few drops of solder on the plate's bolts or blur the bolt threads.
6. To protect your license plate year number tag from being stolen, using a razor blade or other sharp tool, draw an "X" through the tag from one end to the other.

TO REDUCE YOUR LOSSES IF YOUR CAR IS STOLEN

1. Carry your Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) and your license plate number with your proof of insurance card so you can report all the pertinent information to police immediately after your car is stolen.
2. Keep the title to your car (aka Pink Slip) at home or other safe place.
3. Carry your registration slip (white one) with you unless you share the car with another driver. In that case, make a copy of the registration slip, blanking out your home address with a small piece of paper. Place the copy (without the address) in the glove box. Hide the original elsewhere in the car. Be sure to tell the other driver where the original is hidden.
4. Periodically, "weed out stuff" from your wallet, purse, or glove box. Carry only what you need. Don't leave anything in your glove box that contains your address.
5. Avoid leaving valuables in your car, even for a short time (e.g. PDA's, laptops, golf clubs, credit cards, phones). If they must be left in the car, keep them out of sight, under the seat, in the glove box, in the trunk, or, at least, covered with a blanket. Do not transfer valuables from the inside of the car to the trunk while in public view. Ladies, that includes your purse.

CAR JACKING

Last we heard, about 70 cars are car jacked every day. Car jackers are usually armed and often very nervous. If a car jacker wants your car, GIVE IT TO HIM. Don't argue, don't fuss, and don't plead, just give him the keys. Don't go with him in the car. Do whatever you can to avoid it. Fake a faint or heart attack. Drop to the ground and stay limp. Your chances of surviving a ride with a car jacker are poor. Remember you can always replace your car. You are one of a kind, we cannot replace you.

WALKING AND BEING STREET SMART

Exercising and keeping fit is a way of life for many people. Walking and running is an inexpensive, easy way to stay in shape. Some people simply walk for pleasure. Some people join walking clubs. Some people plan their walks while multi-tasking to do their shopping or running errands. People who travel for business or pleasure choose walking to stay in fit while they maintain their scheduled activities. Walking is good; however, we remind you when your walks take you out and about in public places, you may face potential danger from criminals. Criminals prey on the public and they are constantly looking for new victims. Don't be afraid and don't allow the bad guys to deter you from your exercise. You can defend yourself from these criminals. BE STREET SMART. The Bureau of Justice Statistics says about 70% of all crimes could have been avoided if the victims had been street-smart.

Being street-smart has nothing to do with fighting or kicking. Being street-smart has to do with (1) planning ahead; (2) being alert to what's happening around you; (3) your ability to communicate to the criminal that you are not an easy target; and (4) trusting your instinct

(1) **PLAN AHEAD** - Before you go out in public, we suggest:

- Do not wear expensive or keepsake jewelry.
- Carry only a minimal amount of cash.
- Always carry some form of identification. If you do not have a spot for it, using a permanent marker, write your name, phone number, blood type, and any other pertinent medical information on your clothing or inside your athletic shoe.
- Wear loose fitting, comfortable clothing that will permit freedom of movement.
- Wear walking or running shoes. Flip-flops, sandals, or high heels will not give you the support you'll need if you must run away from an attacker.
- Always plan your outing and make others aware of your plan.
- There is strength in numbers. Walk with a partner if possible.
- Know where telephones are located along your route or carry a cell phone.
- If your walk includes shopping and/or errands and you think you must carry a purse or a wallet, consider wearing a fanny pack in the front of your body.
- Wearing a whistle on a cord around your neck is a good plan.
- If carrying a battery operated alarm, keep the batteries fresh, keep it in your hand or wear it clipped on your belt. It must be instantly available if needed.
- If carrying pepper spray or mace, keep in mind that wind, weather, the condition of the attacker and your own emotional state will play a role in how effective these weapons will be. If your attacker is younger and stronger than you are, he may take the device from you and use it on you.

(2) **ON THE TRAIL** - While walking:

- Stay in well lighted, populated areas, away from bushes, alley-ways, parked cars, and doorways.

- Beware of dangerous places or conditions on streets that could aid criminals in surprising or attacking you.
- Avoid short cuts through parks, vacant lots, fields, alleys, tunnels, and driveways.
- Always walk facing traffic so you can observe oncoming vehicles.
- If you are having a bad day and are not feeling well or you are tired or mentally upset, you might want to consider restricting your public travel to only what you must do. Try your best to be alert and upbeat during those bad days.

(3) **COMMUNICATING YOU ARE NOT AN EASY TARGET** - If you look like an easy target (a victim) you will become an easy target (a victim). The best way to avoid becoming a victim is to communicate to your public (prospective attacker) by your actions and your demeanor that you are capable of taking care of yourself. Sometimes that may require a bit of deception on your part. Even though your back hurts, your head aches or you may be otherwise impaired, when you are in a public place we suggest:

- Look as calm, cool and confident as possible.
- Walk tall - head up - shoulders back - keep a steady pace - swing one or both arms.
- If you walk slowly or use a cane or a walker, look as though you are deliberately walking slowly and enjoying it.
- Slowly, look around you. Observe who is in your area. Look at them. Make eye contact, but ignore any conversation with them - just keep walking.
- Smile - even if you don't feel like it. You are exhibiting confidence.

FOR LADIES ONLY: Making eye contact with fellow male pedestrians could present a problem to a female. When a woman looks into a man's eyes, if the gaze is held too long, that action may be assumed as flirting. Knowing this, a woman may drop her gaze as she approaches the male. This act can be even more dangerous, as the lowering of eyes can be interpreted as submission. Therefore, we suggest while approaching a male, at that point - instead of lowering your gaze, switch to the top of his head or his shoulder. You have acknowledged you are aware of his presence, you have exhibited that you are alert - but you have not signaled submission.

FOR TRAVELERS: When in an unfamiliar city or country, it may not be easy to know where it is safe to walk. We suggest asking people at the front desk for information. Many large hotels and motels now have exercise facilities on site. If the front desk people cannot help you, consider finding a large mall or a big box store.

FOR EARLY MORNING OR EVENING HOURS: - We suggest using a gym, a treadmill or an indoor track. If you are the fresh air type, consider a well-lighted outdoor track. If these options are not available to you:

- ▶ Wear reflective shoes and clothing that can be detected by others at a distance.
- ▶ Keep your eyes on the road or street. Wet or slick spots often cannot be seen until it's too late.
- ▶ Be alert at all times. Evening hours are a prime time for criminal activities.

FOR MALL OR BIG-BOX STORES - Malls or big stores can be a great place for you to get out and stretch your legs. It should be a safe and pleasurable experience. Here are some tips to make that trip a happy one:

- ▶ Park in a well lighted location. Make a note of the location by using signs or land marks. Some people count the parking spaces to the store.
- ▶ Always close the vehicle's windows and lock the doors when leaving your vehicle.
- ▶ When returning to your vehicle, check the area around and under it. If anything looks or feels suspicious, return to the mall or store.
- ▶ Have your keys in your hand before you get to your vehicle. Look into the vehicle before you get in, then enter, lock the doors and leave the parking lot.

(4) **TRUST YOUR INTUITION** - When out in public, you frequently will have to make judgements about people or situations you will encounter. Many times you won't be sure, but will feel something is wrong - or dangerous. Many times our instincts know we are in danger before our minds do. If in doubt - **TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS**. Follow you gut-feeling. Don't second guess yourself. It's better to be safe than sorry.

If you are attacked while walking

1. If your instincts tell you all your attacker wants is your cash - **GIVE IT TO HIM**. But throw your wallet or money clip as far as you can behind him. When he turns to retrieve your money, **RUN - GET AWAY**- as quickly as possible. Fight only for your life --never for things.
2. If you are in trouble, **MAKE NOISE**. Scream, curse, use your whistle, use your hand-held device, shout "**FIRE, FIRE**" - draw attention to your plight. Bad guys don't want other people to see what they are doing.
3. If your attacker tries to force you into a vehicle - don't go. Feign a heart attack, a faint or simply slip to the ground and stay as limp as possible. It's very hard to move a limp body. Chances are he will leave you there. If you do go with him, your chances of coming back are very slim.
4. If he enters your vehicle while you are driving, consider slowing to 5MPH and crash your vehicle into anything nearby. Then lay on the horn to attract attention.
5. If you must fight - fight to survive. Strike first, strike hard, strike fast. We suggest-stick your fingers into your attacker's eyes. If he is too tall for you to reach his eyes, kick hard into his knees. As he reacts to the pain by bending down, then go for his eyes. **NOW-RUN-SCREAM**-do not ask if he is alright. He planned to hurt you badly. You acted first. That's O.K.

HOLIDAY TIPS FOR A SAFER SEASON

In a few weeks we will be busy preparing to celebrate the most festive season of the entire year. Thanksgiving Day is fast approaching. Then, swift on its heels are Hanukkah, Winter Solstice, Christmas and New Year's Eve and Day. Criminals love these holidays as much as we do because

we give them so many opportunities to commit crimes. Keep these tips in mind for a safe and happy holiday season.

IF YOU'RE TRAVELING

- Set automatic timers for your lights and your radios in your house.
- Ask a trusted neighbor or friend to look after your house, pick up newspapers, collect your mail, and park in your driveway from time-to-time.
- Be sure to hide any gifts that may be left in the house while you are gone.
- Stop in at the Hemet Police Station and request a vacation check of your house while you are away.

IF YOU'RE OUT FOR THE EVENING

- Turn on lights and a radio, or TV, so that it appears someone is home.
- Lock all doors and windows, even if you will be gone for just a few minutes.
- Do not place packages or gifts near windows, or in other high visibility sites.

IF YOU'RE SHOPPING

- Shop with a family member or friend whenever possible.
- Don't let your guard down just because you are rushing.
- Stay alert and be aware of everything around you at all times. Look at people around you. Make eye contact. Criminals are less likely to prey on people who can later identify them.
- Park in well-lighted spaces and as close to a store as possible. **LOCK** your vehicle's doors. Place packages out of sight under the seats, in the trunk, or covered with a blanket.
- Do not carry large amounts of cash - carry only as much as you will need. Pay for your purchases with checks or credit cards if possible.
- Make sure you do not carry all your packages at the same time. Carrying too many packages makes you an easy target.
- Carry your purse close to your body, not dangling by the straps. Put your wallet in an inside coat, or front pants, pocket.
- If you take your children shopping, teach them to go to a mother, a police officer, or a store security guard if they get separated or lost.
- Have your keys out and be prepared to unlock your door as you approach your vehicle

IF A STRANGER COMES TO THE DOOR

- **ALWAYS** check the peep hole or use the window near your door to verify the visitor at your door. If you do not know them or were not expecting them, do not allow them into your home. Couriers delivering packages are usually in uniform and always carry credentials. If the courier is not in a uniform, ask to see the credential.
- Many con artists take advantage of holiday generosity by going door-to-door. Ask for identification and printed materials about the charity. Take your time; think it through;

- then, if you wish, send a check via U.S. mail.
- If you feel uncomfortable, just say “no thank you” and shut the door.

IF YOU'RE AT HOME

- Always close your drapes at night, so you are not exposing your holiday gifts.
- Turn on outside lights to deter burglars.
- Report any suspicious behavior to the police and your local Neighborhood Watch Block Captain.
- Make sure your homeowners or renters insurance policy is up-to-date and you have everything inventoried properly.

HEMET POLICE WANTS TO HEAR FROM YOU

YOU HAVE A QUESTION? WE HAVE ANSWERS.

Send your comments, suggestions, questions, or just interesting thoughts to the Hemet Police Department. We might even publish them in a future edition of the Quarterly Newsletter. Reach us at:

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**The Hemet Police Department
Officers, Staff and Volunteers
Wish you a Healthy, Happy, Safe
Holiday Season.**