

MAY 2013

Quarterly Community Newsletter

It's the month of May. We are in the Spring season. In another month we'll be in the Summer season. Spring brings a feeling of newness to people and good weather brings comfort and joy. Plus, Spring and Summer often bring promises of parties and adventures. Think about it for a minute. Are you going to: graduations, weddings, anniversary celebrations, patriotic picnics --- or how about vacations? These are splendid events. But, often it means we will be leaving our homes and sometimes we will be leaving our town for awhile.

You may be taking a vacation, but crime does not. Homes that look empty or vacant are ideal targets for burglars. Unfortunately, house burglaries and theft statistics in our Valley are up right now. You could become a victim. It would be a good idea to review and update your safety and security before you leave your home, even for a day.

Remember burglaries often last only a few minutes. But those few minutes could cause heart break and dramatic losses for a long time.

VACATION SECURITY FOR YOUR HOME

PLAN AHEAD

Two Weeks before you leave town you may want to:

1. Inspect all your doors and windows. Replace all broken window glass, including garage windows. Replace or supplement locks on doors and windows as required. A spring-loaded key-in-knob lockset on exterior doors is not very secure. Consider adding strong, durable dead-bolt locks with at least a one-and-a-half or two inch throw and three inch screws to secure the strike plates. Supplement locks on double hung wooden windows with an eye bolt or double headed nail that passes through the two sashes where they meet. Aluminum glass doors and windows that slide horizontally receive additional support by placing wood or metal rounds or bars in their tracks. Also, adding pin type closures that slide into the door or window frame are very helpful. For vinyl and other type windows, consult a locksmith or your dealer.

2. Check your irrigations systems. You may want to replace broken sprinkler heads or drip lines. Assure that the electrical devices that operate your systems are in good working order. You might consider replacing the battery that backs up your system's clock in case of power failure. A dying lawn or browning shrubbery is a sure sign no one is home to fix the problem.
3. If you have not already done so, it might be a good idea to arrange to have all regularly scheduled checks, that are delivered to your mail box, direct deposited into your bank account.

One Week before you leave home you may want to:

1. Trim shrubs under windows, either up from the bottom and/or down from the top, so intruders to your home will find the shrub difficult to hide behind.
2. Keep tree branches away from your roof so an intruder cannot use your tree to enter your home from the second story.
3. Consider locking away ladders, barbecue tools or anything else a burglar could steal or use to stand or climb on or to force locks.
4. Make an inventory, either written or pictorial, (or both) of the outside of your home and garage, and all the things you own inside your home and garage. We suggest you also consider engraving an ID on your valuables that are easily portable (tools, bikes, golf carts, golf clubs, TV's, computers, VCR-DVD players, sterling silver tea pots, weapons, etc.) Do not use your California Driver's license number. Make up a code of 6-8 numbers and letters and engrave it on your valuables.

Inventories and engravings are invaluable when making a police report and/or insurance claims. They are also useful when reclaiming your property when it is recovered. We suggest you make two copies of your inventory. Keep one copy at home. Keep the other copy in a separate place in case of disaster at home.

5. Consider going to the Police Department and fill in a Vacation Property Request. A police representative (Volunteer) will attempt to check the exterior of your home at unscheduled times. Any signs of a break-in will be immediately reported and proper action will be taken.
6. If you have them, consider replacing back-up support batteries in your radios, phones, clocks and other equipment.
7. Arrange to have someone you trust water your plants, cut your grass, pick up throw-aways and any trash that may accumulate in your yard.

8. Arrange to have a family member, a friend or neighbor you trust collect your mail and newspapers daily. Or – contact the Post Office and your newspaper office to put a vacation stop on these services.
9. Empty your purse, wallet and key chains. Put back only those things you will absolutely use during your travels. Leave everything else at home. Recognize that you can travel virtually around the world and buy everything you will need or want with one or two credit cards. (See the following article on RFID Alert.) Then take your wallet to a copying machine and make two copies of the front and back of everything you will be carrying in that wallet (not cash). On the copies, add phone numbers and addresses where appropriate. These numbers and addresses will be come important if your purse or wallet is misplaced or stolen. Hide one set of the photocopies somewhere in your suitcase. Leave the other copies at home.
10. Consider buying travelers checks instead of carrying cash if going out of the Country.
11. Copy your itinerary, adding phone numbers where you may be reached. Give the itinerary copy, along with keys to your home to a trusted family member or friend or neighbor.

A Few Days before you leave, consider planting “seeds of doubt” whether the family is at home or not.

1. Because many burglaries happen in daylight hours, consider putting radios on timers in various rooms in your home. Set the times to go on and off at various times.
2. To deter the night time invader, you might want to put timers on lamps in various rooms in your home. Add fresh bulbs to your lamps to avoid burn-out problems. Have the last lamp go off about your normal bedtime. Suggestion: unless it’s your habit to burn lights all night, do not do so now. It’s a flag that there is no one home to turn the light off.
3. If you want to, leave a vehicle parked in your driveway. If you do, make sure the vehicle looks completely empty. Make sure the windows are up and the doors are locked and there are no keys or something of value in the glove compartment. Or, you may ask a family member or neighbor you trust to park in your driveway from time to time. Do NOT leave the garage door opener in the car.
4. Consider moving good/expensive jewelry out of your jewelry box. If you have sterling silver in the dining room, consider moving it out-of-sight or into another location, out of sight. If you are leaving prescription medications at home, consider moving it out of the bathroom and out of sight. If someone is going to steal from you, make them work for your valuables. Don’t make it easy for them.

5. We strongly recommend you do not place any details of your day or days away from home on the internet. Share all the fun and adventures you've had when you come home. You don't know who is reading your messages on the internet. Don't tell people your house will be left unguarded and empty – available to thieves.

Take Off Day: After a good night's sleep, you are all packed and ready to leave on your dream vacation. Just before you leave home, walk into each of your rooms. Physically check each window and door. Are they closed and locked? Are your window shades or blinds in the position you usually keep them? Is the back door to your home closed and locked? Is the front door closed and locked? Is the garage door closed and locked? Then go off and have a fun vacation. You've done all you could to keep your home secure. We'll see you when you get home.

RFID ALERT

Time was when we could carry our credit cards in our wallet or purse, or jacket or pants pockets. If we were careful not to be careless and lose them or have a pickpocket person take the cards, we were o.k. (We still must continue to do this.)

Then – awhile later – we were warned to carefully watch anyone to whom we gave our cards to – to pay our bills. They could have swiped our cards on their own devices, so they could copy all our numbers. Then they could make new cards, with our numbers on them, and charge things to our accounts. (We must continue to do this also.)

Now, we are being told that debit and credit cards and passports have been and are being updated. When we receive a new card (when our old cards are about to expire and or when we apply for a new passport) they now have to be retooled to contain a magnetic strip that contains all our private information. Now, we have more to worry about than pickpockets and scanners. There are now high tech machines called RFID devices that can, at a distance from us, scan our pockets, our wallets and our purses. The RFID device can, at a distance, read everything that is on the magnetic strips on our debit or credit cards and also on the new passports.

What can we do to protect our cards and/or passports? There are now available new wallets and small boxes, that are lined with aluminum, that offer protection from RFID thieves by blocking the radio frequency tags (RF) imbedded in our new cards and passports. If you can not find these new products that satisfy you yet, consider wrapping your cards and/or passport with aluminum foil. That works just as well. (We will have to continue to do this.)

LANDSCAPING FOR HOME SECURITY

Residential security through landscape design is an important aspect of crime prevention. A few alterations to the landscape can be enough to put off intruders.

Some modifications may be physical barriers such as spiny plants located along fences and under windows. Others may be psychological deterrents – if a garden looks well maintained, allows few hiding places, and is well lighted at night, statistics show that burglars are more likely to search for easier targets. According to statistics, most burglars are “opportunity criminals,” not professionals – they see an easy target and take advantage of it.

Design landscaping and prune shrubs and trees so they do not block the view of front entrances or porches. It will give you, your neighbors, and law enforcement a clear view and deny an intruder a place to hide.

When planting, use security plants which:

1. Have prickly leaves or thorns.
2. Reduce access over fences and through windows.
3. Reduce concealment and loitering opportunities.

While there are no plants that will actually catch a burglar, the plants names below, through thorns or prickly foliage will restrict access to your yard. Combined with proper security inside your home, you can make the property virtually prowler proof. We suggest you consult a local nursery for the best plants to use.

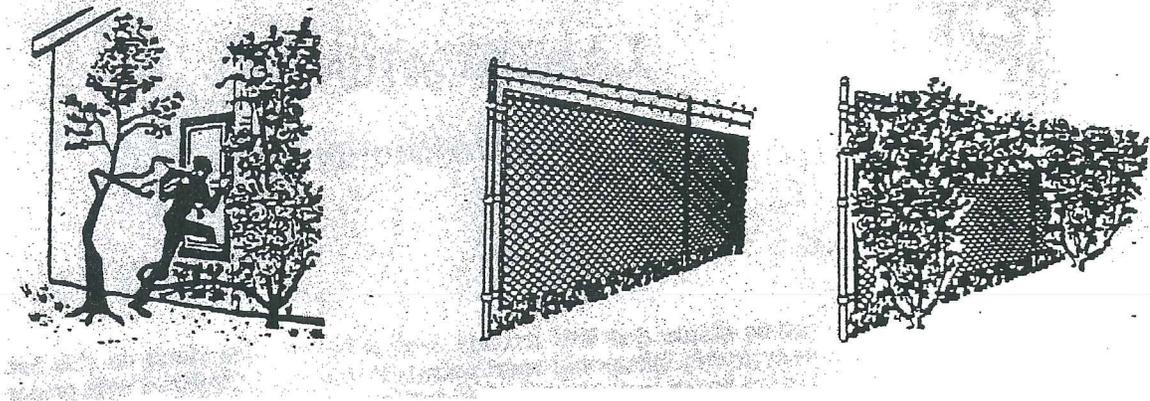
Following are a few suggestions of common named plants to use:

Barbary varieties	Pampas grass	Pomegranate
Bougainvilleas	Bearas	Rose varieties
Gravillea	Holly	Gooseberry
Tuinca	Juniper	Yucca
Mex. Palo Verde	Firethorn varieties	Caucus

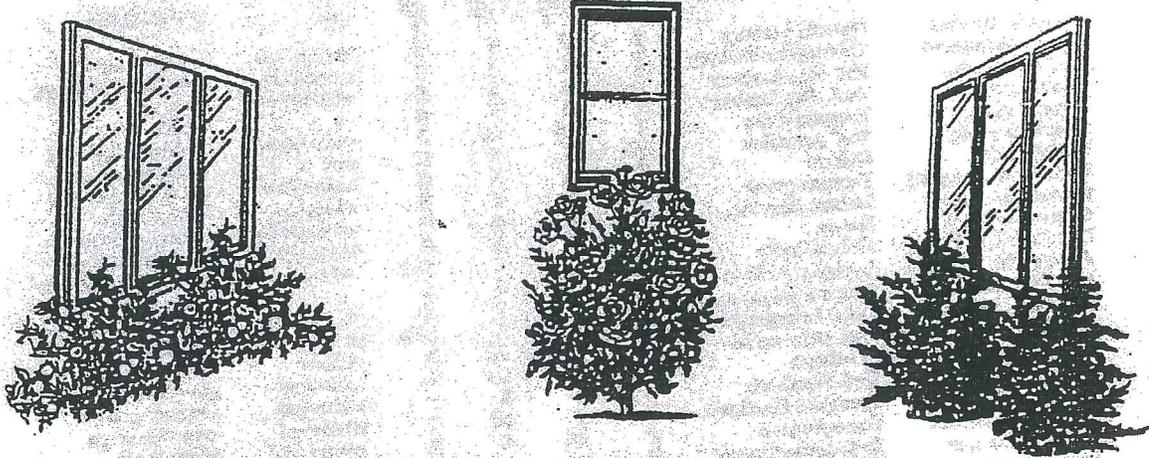
The following suggestions will discourage burglars, thereby reducing the chances of becoming a victim:

1. Train spiny vines over fences.
2. Use infrared security lights.
3. Use gravel on paths next to bedrooms
4. Put prickly plants below vulnerable windows.
5. Protect outside face of fence with thorny shrubs or ground covers.
6. Keep gates locked.
7. Prune shrubs below window level.
8. Prune up or thin tall shrubs near doors and paths.
9. Prune tree branches away from roof, windows, and address numbers. Branches near roofs can act as a natural ladder.
10. Light outdoors along paths, in shrubs, and at entrances.
11. Lock up your ladder and be mindful of patio covers, etc., which may be used to gain access to the second story or roof.
12. On vacations-arrange to have a trusted friend or neighbor pick up mail and newspapers. Arrange to have the lawn mowed.

You cannot make a residence absolutely burglar-proof, but you can make entry so difficult that the burglar will go elsewhere in search of an easier target. The more crime prevention steps you take, the greater your security.



Barbed wire or Climbing Roses, both discourage prowlers but roses smell nicer And look a lot friendlier from inside your house.



Use low growing plants with thorns under low windows, taller growing varieties under high windows. Use varieties that will not cover the window in case you need to get out during a fire.



RIGHT

Design landscaping and prune shrubs and trees so they do not block the view of the front entrance or porches. It will give you, your neighbors and patrolling police cars a view of potential problems and deny an intruder a place to hide.



WRONG

OLD SCAM – BACK AGAIN

A dozen years ago, we alerted our readers to a telephone scam coming from – some folks said Mexico – actually it was from the Dominican Republic. Again, the scam came back again in 2006 and we alerted our folks again. Guess what! It's back again. Here is how it works.

You come home and there is a message waiting for you on your telephone answering machine. Actually there can be several types of messages. One call may say, one of your relatives is in deep trouble with the law and they are in jail, or very sick and in the hospital. In either case, your relative needs your help now. You must return the call now. Or, the message may take on a different topic, like you've won a fabulous prize. Or, they may say there has been a mix up on your credit card and it must be corrected. They say anything to encourage you to call them back.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

The call well may be from a Caribbean Country, but you do not dial 011 first (like you do when you call anyone in the rest of the world). The Caribbean Countries telephone process is as it is here in the U.S. We dial -1- and the area code, then the number of the person we want to contact.

We sincerely recommend you **do not respond to any telephone message** you receive unless you know where the area code is located and until you check it out. Actually, if a stranger tells you one of your relative's is in trouble and needs your help, it would be more productive to first call relative's home or family members, to check where they are. They may very well be o.k.

WHY IS THIS A SCAM?

If you call the number you are given and if it's not in the U.S., chances are the person who answers the phone, one way or another, will keep you on the line as long as possible. Chances are they will tell you, you must talk with someone else, "please hold on". The problem is – it is a call to a foreign country. Their phone companies are private businesses. No one in the U.S. owns them. You make the call, you have to pay for it. It could cost you a bundle of money.

We heard recently, a call like this to the Dominican Republic could cost you \$2,425 PER MINUTE. Even if the call is a scam.

BEWARE of area codes in the Caribbean Countries, especially area codes:
876, 868, 809, 784, 758, 784, 758, 784, 664, 473, 441 and 246.

Please check out area codes you do not know before you make the call.

A HAND UP



INSTEAD OF A HAND OUT

As a citizen of the Hemet / San Jacinto Valley, you have no doubt noticed the increase in panhandling the last few months.

The Citizens for Safer Communities has also noticed the increase. Together with the Hemet/San Jacinto Chamber of Commerce, Hemet Police Department, Valley Restart, Local Churches, and charitable organizations, we have formed a coalition that created a plan to greatly reduce panhandling by helping to give the panhandler a 'Hand Up' and not a 'Hand Out'.

First, there is some information you should have:

1. **Panhandling is not against the law**, unless it is aggressive (you are threatened).
2. A sample survey taken of panhandlers in the valley revealed the majority are not homeless people. They say they are unemployed citizens simply looking for help.
3. Unemployed residents are eligible for welfare, food stamps, rental assistance, aid to dependant children, Medi-Cal, re-training programs, and other benefits.
4. It appears many panhandlers may not know such assistance is available to them.
5. Over time, a person remaining unemployed can develop it as a habit. Habits can be hard break if they are supported.
6. **By giving panhandlers money (a hand out), *you are helping to support their habit, which may include illegal drugs and alcohol.***

**** WHAT YOU CAN DO ****

1. DO NOT GIVE PANHANDLERS CASH.
2. GIVE THEM A 'HAND UP' BY PROVIDING THE INFORMATION THEY NEED THAT MAY CHANGE THEIR LIVES FOR THE BETTER.
3. GIVE PANHANDLERS 'A HAND UP.' (Smile and say you hope life gets better for them)
4. IF A PANHANDLER THREATENS YOU, GO IMMEDIATELY TO THE NEAREST OPEN BUSINESS. ASK TO USE THEIR TELEPHONE, OR USE YOUR OWN TELEPHONE IN THE SAFETY OF OTHER PEOPLE. CALL YOUR POLICE TO REPORT THE INCIDENT. TALK TO YOUR BUSINESS PERSON ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED.
5. GIVE YOUR DONATIONS IN PERSON TO ORGANIZATIONS THAT HELP OUR VALLEY'S POOR PEOPLE.

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To DOWNLOAD and/or view Newsletter from our Web-Site:

Go to www.hemetpolice.org then click **Community Services** then **Quarterly Newsletter**.

To RECEIVE TEXT and/or E-MAIL ALERTS from the Hemet Police Web-Site:

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*****As always, we will NEVER sell, loan, rent or otherwise share your personal information*****

HEMET POLICE WANTS TO HEAR FROM YOU

YOU HAVE A QUESTION? WE HAVE ANSWERS

Send your comments, suggestions, question, 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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