

## ***SAFETY TIPS***

Officer Jaron Black, our Prince George's County Community Police Officer, and Chief Michael Wynnyk, University Park Police Department, have provided us with a number of home safety tips. Here is the consolidated list of their items:

An appearance that a resident is present and is attentive to the condition of the property is, in itself, a potent deterrent to would-be criminals.

Physical security equipment is absolutely worthless unless used. **Lock your doors** regardless of whether they are upper or lower level entrances. Install and use a peephole in your door(s). Do not answer knocks at the door without first checking to see who it is. Instruct children not to answer/open the door automatically. Use your deadbolts, and turn on the alarm.

Replacement windows usually have a device to keep them from being opened beyond six inches. Please use this option. First floor windows should be kept locked. **Fix those broken windows.**

Use timers to make your home appear occupied when you're away.

Use blinds and drapes for privacy.

Check your exterior lights to make sure they are working, and **utilize motion sensor lights.**

**The component in any security system most likely to fail is the human one. If you have an alarm, use it.** Equip it with the exterior audible alarm as well.

Video surveillance is a great way to have a neighborhood watch. Some residents do monitor their property with video cameras and have provided video evidence when a crime has occurred in their area.

If you see a vehicle you don't recognize driving around your neighborhood, jot down the tag number. It may end up being the link to closing a case.

**Keep your garden tools locked up.** These types of objects have been used to pry windows open. The tools outside your home are the tools (shovels, weed diggers, screwdrivers, etc.) being used to break in. Secure ladders (with a lock) left outside so that they can not be used to climb to the upper floor windows.

Trim bushes and shrubbery to remove any hiding places for an attacker to lurk.

Don't let your mail build up. Leave radios and/or a TV on loud, occasionally. If you see an unfamiliar vehicle on the block, get the tag number.

Use only initials and last names on mailboxes and phone listings (so as not to identify yourself as a female or a female living alone).

**Document the serial numbers of your laptops.** If you have a newer expensive laptop, consider "computer lo-jack" software such as <http://www.absolute.com/>. This software is inexpensive and is a great tool for tracking your stolen property. Password-protect your computer, laptop, cell phone, blackberry, PDA, etc. so that you protect your identity information.

**Write down the serial numbers and model numbers of your property.** This obviously helps with the identification process.

Never place a key over your doorway or under a flowerpot, etc. Leave a spare key with a neighbor who is well known to you.

When returning home during hours of darkness, use a cellular telephone to alert someone inside your residence of your arrival. Always have your keys in hand upon exiting a vehicle. Keep hands free of excessive packages/bulky items.

Never enter your home if you see that a door or window has been forced. Go to a neighbor's and call police.

Another step toward home crime prevention is to **be a good neighbor**. It's a great time to get to know your neighbors better, so that you are familiar with who should and shouldn't be in their back yard. Get to know the habits of your neighbors to the extent that you can recognize deviations from normal behavior (and they can do the same for you).

If you are home during the day, look out your back window and into your neighbor's yard for anyone you do not recognize. Work in your yards and **take a good look around when you are outside**

Don't ever tell anyone that you are or a neighbor is home alone. Never leave notes or messages on your door, since they advertise that you're away and when you plan to return

Require identification from all strangers (includes delivery/repair persons and police officers). If you're not sure of a person's ID, call the person's company/agency.

When jogging/taking walks or participating in other outdoor activities alone, let someone know your intended path of travel and estimated time of return. Better yet, don't jog alone. Walk in pairs or with a group.

**Call the police when you observe a stranger behaving in a suspicious manner** (loitering and observing, approaching multiple residences without apparent business, or removing property from a neighbor's residence). A cooperative neighborhood can increase everyone's collective home security with very little individual effort or time. *Be*

*creative in your vigilance, and be the person who calls the police when something doesn't seem right*