

**March 2024**

**A Safer Naper --- Burglary Prevention**

Whether you are traveling out of town for spring break or running to the grocery store, it is important to keep your property safe. This month, the Naperville Police Department aims to make Naperville “A Safer Naper” by educating residents on burglary prevention.

The six members of the Naperville Police Department Crimes Against Property Crimes Unit, composed of a sergeant and five detectives, review on average over 200 property crime cases each month. Property crimes include burglaries, theft, fraud (which includes identity theft) and vandalism.

In 2023, there were 51 residential burglaries in the City of Naperville. Sixty-seven percent (67%) of those residential burglaries were to unlocked or unsecured homes. That makes locking up and securing your property the number one tip for preventing residential burglary. But being alert for suspicious activity is also a key to preventing this property crime.

**SECTION 1: What is Suspicious Activity?**

Did you know a burglar can be in and out of a home in as little as ninety seconds? Or that a burglar/burglary crew will often perform surveillance on a residence they intend to burglarize, sometimes days in advance?

Burglars will take notice of daily patterns and check to see if anyone is home before they strike. This could include ringing the doorbell to see if anyone answers, pretending to be landscapers or solicitors, looking into windows, and accessing backyards to make entry into the residence.

That makes constant vigilance and being alert for suspicious activity one of the most important things you can do to prevent residential burglary! Pay attention to who belongs in your neighborhood and report any suspicious activity immediately to 9-1-1.

Suspicious activity is any occurrence that is out of place in your neighborhood. Examples of suspicious activity include:

- A person behaving strangely, exhibiting unusual movements or wandering aimlessly.
- A parked car with the engine running, regardless of whether a person is inside or not.
- A person looking into a window of a house.
- Someone loitering around schools, parks or secluded areas.
- A scream heard anywhere.
- A person being forced into a car.
- A beam from a flashlight in a neighbor’s home, especially if they are away.
- A person looking into cars, moving from car to car and/or trying door handles.
- Someone you don’t recognize entering your neighbor’s house or garage.
- Open or broken doors or windows.
- Someone entering or leaving a business after hours.
- The sound of breaking glass or loud noises.

Less obvious things to look for:

Not every stranger who comes into your neighborhood is a criminal. Many legitimate people are in our neighborhoods all the time. However, some criminals do take advantage of this fact by assuming the appearance of salespeople, landscapers, repairmen, utility and city workers. Here are some additional things to look for:

- Someone going door-to-door; if after a few houses are visited, one or more people try to open a door, look into a window or go to a back or side yard.
- Human and vehicular traffic to and from a certain residence on a daily or regular basis, especially if it happens during late or unusual hours.
- People taking a short cut through a back yard. They may have broken into someone's home or are looking to break into a home.
- Parked vehicles occupied with one or more people, especially if it is an unusual hour or you don't recognize the vehicle.
- Vehicles moving slowly and without lights and/ or circling your block numerous times.
- Vehicles being loaded with valuable items in front of an unattended residence or a business.
- A person running who does not appear to be exercising, especially at night.
- People casually walking through the neighborhood looking into cars, backyards, etc.
- Abandoned vehicles parked on the block.

## **SECTION 2: Reporting Suspicious Activity to 9-1-1**

When you call to report suspicious activity, be calm and ready to provide as many of the following facts as you have available:

- What happened
- Where and when it occurred
- If anyone is injured
- Description of suspect(s)
  - Race/Sex/Age
  - Height/Weight/Hair color
  - Peculiarities (scars, tattoos, noticeable features)
- Weapons (if any)
- Clothing description
- Description of vehicle(s)
  - License plate (most important)
  - Year/Make/Model
  - Color
  - Damage or noticeable features (one headlight, logos, bumper stickers, etc.)
- Time and direction of suspect travel

## **SECTION 3: Residential Burglary Prevention Tips**

### **DOORS AND WINDOWS**

- Windows have latches not locks; therefore, install secondary locking devices on all windows.
- All exterior doors should be solid core or of metal construction.
- Exterior doors should have deadbolt locks with a 1-inch throw and reinforced strike plates with 2-3 inch screws. Most importantly, use them!

- A good quality double cylinder deadbolt lock should be used if there is glass with 40 inches of the lock.
- Install a peephole with at least a 180-degree viewing area.
- Secure sliding glass doors. A metal or wood rod along the bottom track is advised, as is the installation of vertical bolts along the top track.
- Secure basement windows with grilles or grates (but make sure they can be opened from the inside in case of fire).

#### EXTERIOR, INTERIOR, AND LANDSCAPE

- Install outside lights and keep them on at night. Pay special attention to entrances, porches and yards.
- Use inexpensive timers or photo electric cells to automatically turn lights on and off at dusk and dawn.
- Utilize a high-quality, heavy-duty safe bolted to the floor to protect cash, jewelry and other valuables.
- There is no guaranteed foolproof hiding spot(s) for valuables, but there are places in a home that should be avoided such as the master bedroom, master bedroom closet, nightstands, dresser drawers, jewelry boxes, and portable safes. Old clichés of hiding valuables under mattresses, in freezers or in or behind toilet tanks should also be avoided.
- Create the illusion that someone is home by using timers on lights and/or leaving the TV on.
- Trim shrubbery and trees so doors and windows are visible from the street.
- Don't let your tree be a ladder. If there is a second floor, prune nearby trees so a thief cannot use them to reach second floor windows.
- Don't leave ladders or tools outside; they can assist a person in gaining entry.
- Draw all curtains/shades at night to prevent viewing from the street.

#### ALARM SYSTEMS

- Learn how to use your alarm system properly to reduce false alarms. Fees can be assessed for excessive false alarms.
- Put a warning sign on windows and entrances.
- Know your pass codes and make sure your call back list is up to date.

#### CAMERA SYSTEMS

- Choose the right location and optimal camera angles.
- Position camera angles to cover all points of entry.
- Choose the right equipment. (Outdoor camera, indoor camera, video doorbell etc.)
- Make sure the system is recording.
- Check the motion sensor sensitivity.
- Set up the right notifications.

#### ADDITIONAL PREVENTION TIPS

- Keep doors, windows and garage doors locked even when at home. Patrol officers report hundreds of open garage doors each month during the evening hours.

- Never leave a house key in an obvious place such as in a mailbox or under plants or doormats.
- Don't tell a stranger that your neighbor is not home or volunteer any personal information about your neighbor.
- Do not post on any social networking sites that you are going out of town.
- While traveling, keep your home looking lived-in by having the grass cut, mail and newspapers picked up, and lights turned on and off with timers.

#### **SECTION 4: Ruse Entry Burglary Prevention Tips**

Ruse entry burglaries or “distraction burglaries” are an attempt to enter someone’s house through deception, usually with the intent to steal valuables or cash money kept in a house. Senior citizens are often targeted by these groups during daylight hours. Offenders usually will pose as outside workers, such as surveyors, utility company workers, tree trimmers or city water department employees to get homeowners outside and lure them away from the front entrance. Once the homeowner is outside the home or isolated to a particular area of the home, another offender will sneak inside to snatch small items like jewelry or cash.

Protect yourself from ruse entry burglaries with these tips:

- If you’re not sure who is at your door, don’t open it.
- Check the identity of the person by calling the company they are purporting to be from. Do not use any telephone numbers provided by the individual, though. Find the company's number online, on a utility bill or through other means.
- Many utility service providers will call on the phone prior to arriving at your home. In many cases, the caller will be the technician who will be arriving. Ask them for their name ahead of time.
- Safeguard valuable items and documents in a safe or safe deposit box.
- Keep your doors and windows locked at all times.
- If somebody shows up at your home asking for help or needing to make a phone call, assist them through a closed door or call a friend or neighbor to come and assist.

When to call 9-1-1:

- If you are suspicious or it just doesn’t “feel” right.
- If someone forces entry or enters your home without permission.
- If you notice valuables or money have gone missing shortly after someone has visited.
- Whenever you think a crime has been, or is about to be, committed.