



LAKEVIEW AT BRANDYWINE NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAM (NWP)

EMERGENCY NUMBER 9-1-1
NON-EMERGENCY NUMBER 301-352-1200

Community members only serve as the extra "eyes and ears" of law enforcement. Report observations of suspicious activities to law enforcement. Never take action on those observations. Trained law enforcement will take action based on observations of suspicious activities.



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The original purpose of NWP was to increase awareness in communities about ways to protect homes from burglaries. Although NWP has expanded over the years, protecting homes is still a priority. Since most burglaries and thefts are crimes of opportunity, the more obstacles that we put in place to protect ourselves, the less the chance of our being victimized. In sports, the more defenses a team has, and the better that defense is, the less likely the opponent will be to score. In target hardening, we want to increase our “defense” by identifying multiple methods that you can employ to protect yourself and stop the criminal. Some are common sense methods that cost little or no time or effort, while others may be more complicated. The number of home burglaries is still high and community members should do everything possible to prevent burglaries. When a person falls victim to an attack on their home they feel vulnerable and usually do not recover the stolen property. Law enforcement can help citizens protect their property not just to keep crime rates low, but also because if their property is stolen, they will likely never see it again.

BASIC HOME TARGET HARDENING TECHNIQUES

When developing a target hardening program to protect against home burglaries, law enforcement can suggest a variety of options. Target hardening can range from the purchase of elaborate alarm systems with every possible type of monitor, to buying a dog that announces the arrival of anyone at your door. NSA offers a Target Hardening course through the Neighborhood Watch Toolkit, or you can contact your local law enforcement for assistance in developing strategies. These techniques are designed to assist homeowners in protecting their property by using some simple, cost-effective crime prevention methods. These include using appropriate doors, locks, windows, lighting, appearance, alarms and garages, and provide some helpful hints that range across several categories of safety and security.

ASSESSING THE STRUCTURE

When scanning a home, you begin your home burglary risk assessment with the front door and work your way around the house. Start at the entryway of the house or apartment and observe the door, the locks, nearby windows, entry area lighting and the general appearance of the home, as well as other features such as whether an alarm system is present. Next, move counterclockwise around to the side and back where you may encounter a garage, shed or other areas that need to be secured.

DOORS

As the primary point of entry for many burglars, the first item to inspect is the front door. Hollow-core or poorly fitting doors can mean trouble, as can front doors that are not equipped with proper deadbolt locks (at least one inch and half in depth). All exterior doors should be metal or 30 solid wood and have strong door hinges on the inside of the door with hidden or non-removable pins. Officers should recommend homeowners install good quality deadbolt locks on all exterior doors and on any doors that open to attached garages.

LOCKS

Recommend homeowners install strong, reliable deadbolt locks extending at least one inch and half when in the locked position. They may also want to consider deadbolts with reinforced strike plates and extra long mounting screws to anchor the lock. Finally, if there is a change in home ownership, recommend all locks be changed immediately to avoid the possibility that extra keys to the house may be in the hands of unknown individuals. High quality security locks are available at most major market retailers and hardware stores.

Basic Home Target Hardening Techniques



Assessing the
Structure

Doors

Locks

Windows

Lighting

Alarms

Garage

Exterior

Appearance



WINDOWS

After doors, windows are the next most-utilized access points, yet they are often overlooked by both law enforcers and citizens alike. Windows can be broken, pried open or lifted from their tracks, or can have their panes removed by thieves. It is important for your windows to have locks on them. Though placing nails or pins in a double hung window can be a fire hazard it can provide extra security when away. You might want to have a professional window expert come out and talk to you about the security of your windows or what you can do to make them more secure.

LIGHTING

Although lighting is often considered decorative, a well lighted house can expose individuals attempting to conceal themselves and commit criminal acts. Officers should discuss the use of both interior and exterior lighting. A lighting audit should be completed after dark to be certain you are evaluating artificial illumination and not daylight. It is okay if the night is bright due to moonlight. At least two people will need to work together so you can check for things like color recognition/identification. Working in pairs is also a good idea for reasons of personal safety. In areas less lighted at night you might consider motion detector lighting or sensor lights.

ALARMS

The mere presence of some alarm systems may deter potential burglars. Alarm company signs placed in the yard, stickers on the windows and visible contacts or keypads are often enough to cause the average burglar to think twice before trying to break in. Since burglary is a crime of opportunity, the potential thief may decide to move on to a location that does not have an alarm system. There are many types of alarm systems on the market including monitored, non-monitored, audible, wireless, sound-based, motion-based, etc. In many jurisdictions, alarm permits must be purchased and there may be penalties for false alarms. The purchase of an alarm system and its accompanying service or monitoring fees can be a major financial commitment, and is one that should be thoroughly researched by the homeowner.

GARAGES

When it comes to security, the garage is one area of the home that is commonly overlooked. Many garages have electronic garage door openers that give the homeowner a false feeling of security. Another often ignored element of the garage is the door that connects the garage to the house. If this door is not kept secure, then anyone entering the garage can enter the house. In order to increase garage security and house security, residents should always lock the doors connecting a home to an attached garage. They should not rely on an automatic garage door opener for security. At home, people should always park their cars in the garage with the garage door shut. If a burglar notices a pattern where the garage door is left open, or cars are normally parked in the driveway whenever someone is home, then a closed garage door or no cars in the driveway may be a giveaway that no one is home. Consistency in leaving the cars in the garage behind closed doors will keep from tipping off the burglar that the home is unoccupied. Besides, leaving the garage door open allows strangers to see whatever belongings are stored in the garage. It's a good idea for homeowners to install automatic openers that will allow them to stay in their cars until safely parked in the garage.

EXTERIOR APPEARANCES

Making sure your trees and bushes are trimmed and don't provide secluded shelter for a robber is important. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) refers to how to use various crime prevention techniques while maintaining or improving the appearance of the property. Some lessons borrowed from CPTED may include: using fences, walkways, and shrubs to direct visitor access, limit entry or call attention to individuals who have deviated from the designated pathway; planting thorny bushes around windows to make illegal entry more difficult; trimming shrubs and trees that could conceal criminals; cutting back tree limbs that might allow thieves to climb into windows; and using landscaping designs that provide maximum visibility to and from the house. Contact your law enforcement liaison to request an officer certified in CPTED to analyze the homes in your community.