

Your Security

Dear Clients and Friends,

If you're like many of the rest of us, you have no doubt made a number of New Year's resolutions. Well, we'd like you to consider adding one more to your list—keeping your home and family safe from crime during the new millennium.

Did you know that, according to the FBI, a residential burglary occurs every nine seconds? The fact is, the average family has a three-in-four chance of being burglarized during a twenty year period!

That's the bad news. The good news is there is something you can do about it.

Studies conducted by researchers at Temple University found that homes protected by a security system are 2.2 times less likely to be victimized than homes without a system. Businesses with a system cut their risk 4.6 times.

If you like those odds better, give us a call or drop us an email. We'll show you how to keep you and yours from becoming another crime statistic.

Best wishes for a prosperous and safe new year—and millennium!

Would you recognize a burglar if you saw one?

Burglars and Their Habits

Some serious efforts have been made on the part of researchers in recent years to find out more about burglars and their habits. Studies on the self-reported crimes of repeat burglary offenders has contributed to a comprehensive profile of the American burglar.

Burglars Are Young and Dangerous

Over two-thirds of all burglars commit their first break-ins between the ages of eleven and twenty-five. Burglars are largely grouped in the sixteen to twenty-five age group, with the majority clustering at eighteen to twenty-one. This means that your chances of being burglarized by a "seasoned pro" are relatively low.

But it also means that the possibility for vandalism, violence and overreaction is high. In fact, over three-fifths of all rapes and one-third of assaults in the home are committed by burglars.

Family Life is Tough

Most burglars are unmar-



ried, and many come from poor homes. But poverty is probably not the crucial variable. Violence in the family seems to be a more accurate predictor of delinquency than poverty alone. And burglars tend to lead lonely lives, with few attachments to family or friends.

Many criminals live in the same neighborhoods as their victims. In fact, most break-ins occur within a five- to ten-mile radius of the burglar's own home.

Do Drugs Increase Burglaries?

Yes! Out of all factors studied, drug use is most strongly associated with increases in residential crime. On average, 70% of all burglars use drugs within 24- to 48-hours of their crimes.

Put Fire Safety at the Top of Your Priority List

While some fires begin naturally—such as with lightning—most often they are man-made and therefore preventable.

Unfortunately, many of us are lax in using the most effective means of fire fighting: smoke and heat detectors, fire prevention education and fire exit drills. Consequently, fire is among the leading causes of accidental death in the home each year.

Prevention: The First Step in Fire Safety

The key is to prevent fires, not put them out! While every room in your home has potential fire hazards, two of the most likely areas for a fire to start are the kitchen and garage.

In the Kitchen

Make sure all electrical appliances and tools have a testing agency label—either U.L. for Underwriters Laboratories or

FM for Factory Mutual. Frayed or worn power cords or plugs should be checked for wear and replaced when necessary.

Thoroughly dry hands before operating appliances, switches or outlets. Never plug more appliances into a socket than it is designed to handle safely. Store only nonflammable items over the stove. Turn pot handles inward so children can't pull them down. Have an appropriate fire extinguisher on a wall away from the stove.

In the Garage

Items to be saved should never be stored near the furnace or water heater. (Hint: many of these items can be stored in plastic or metal garbage cans, which are airtight as well as fire retardant.) Have heating equipment checked annually. Store gasoline and other flammables in tight metal containers, preferably



away from the house and never near the heating equipment or a pilot light.

Smoke Detectors: Your Early Warning System

Since most fire deaths are caused by suffocation, and usually at times when people are sleeping, smoke detectors are the most effective piece of fire-fighting equipment you can have in your home.

Smoke detectors should be installed in the immediate vicinity of the bedrooms and on each additional story of the family living unit.

Monitored smoke detectors are the best. These devices will send a fire signal to a central monitoring station so that the fire department is dispatched immediately, whether you are home or not.

After installation, smoke detectors should be tested at least once a month.



Fifteen Ways to Protect Your Car From Thieves

Car theft in the United States is at epidemic proportions. A conservative estimate by the Federal Highway Administration is that over 1.5 million vehicles are stolen every year. That's over 4,000 in the last 24 hours alone.

Don't be lulled into a false sense of security because you drive an older or "average" car. Police data show that the good old family wagon is just as likely to be stolen as an expensive luxury or sports model.

So what can you do to make sure your car stays where

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Car Theft

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you parked it? Here are some proven precautions to reduce the odds that your car or its contents will be stolen.

■ Park in well-lit areas, preferably where other cars are parked.

■ Try not to park at the end of a line of cars.

■ Use a garage with a door that locks if one is open and available, especially when parking at night or in a high-crime area.

■ When you leave your car unattended, lock all doors, keep all the windows rolled up and lock the glove compartment.

■ Take the key with you every time you get out, even if you are leaving the car for a very short time.

■ Don't leave ignition keys concealed in the car or in magnetic boxes stuck under the dashboard or fender. Car thieves know about these hiding places.

■ Leave only the ignition key with the attendant in a parking lot.

■ Never use an identification tag bearing the car's license plate number with your keys. If you lose your keys and a thief finds them, he will know what car to look for.

■ Always know the license number, make and model of the car you have parked, whether it is your own or someone else's.

■ Don't keep the drivers license and vehicle registration in the car itself. If the car is stolen, the thief could use these papers

to impersonate the owner.

■ Don't leave money, check-books, wallets or credit cards—or anything else of value—in the car at any time.

■ When leaving your car unattended, keep packages and other valuable items in the trunk, out of sight.

■ When returning to the car, check to see if it has been tampered with, and scan the backseat to see if someone is hiding inside the car.

■ If you park in an unfamiliar area and your car won't start when you return, be wary of the stranger who wants to help. He may be setting you up for a crime.

■ When you leave your car unattended, be sure to activate all anti-theft devices and alarms.

Amazing Facts!



• To produce a pound of honey a bee must tap into two million flowers.

• The world's smallest mammal is the bumblebee bat of Thailand, which weighs less than a penny.

• If you weighed all the insects on earth, ants would make up almost half the total.

• A Blue Whale's tongue is approximately the same size and weight as a full-grown African elephant.



Make It Hard for Criminals to Sell Your Property

One very effective way to protect your valuables is to make them difficult to sell.

The first step is to make a careful inventory of all your valuables, including a description, serial numbers, and identifying marks or scratches.

When you can accomplish it without damaging the

article, mark it with your initials or driver's license number with an electric pencil (available at any hardware store).

For smaller items or items that would be damaged by the marking process, photograph them and keep these photographs with your inventory list in a safe deposit box or safe.

All this effort will come in handy when you need to make an insurance claim or identify property recovered by the police.

Many communities have adopted property identification programs based on these techniques (often referred to as "Operation ID"). Ask your local crime prevention officer if your city has such a program. If so, ask about decals you can display indicating that your property has been protected in this way. This will often convince a burglar to do his "shopping" elsewhere.





Poison Prevention

Guidelines for Preventing Accidental Poisoning

- Never call medicine “candy.”
- Do not take your own medicine in the presence of children too young to understand what you are doing.
- Never give medicine in the dark.
- Use products with child-safety caps.
- Destroy old medications by pouring them down the drain or the toilet. Rinse containers that held liquid medications before throwing them away.
- Purchase syrup of ipecac and keep it on hand in case it is necessary to induce vomiting.
- Keep the number of the local poison control center posted near the telephone.

Each year more than one million cases of poisoning—85 percent of them young children—occur in the United States, leading to thousands of deaths and a great deal of sickness and suffering.

Everyone has potentially poisonous items in their home. But you can help keep your children safely out of harm’s way by taking these types of precautions.

- Keep foods and household products separated.

If you Suspect Poisoning

1. Look for these signs of poisoning: dizziness, drowsiness, odor on breath, open bottle or spilled contents, vomiting, nausea or pain in abdomen, difficult or shallow breathing, hyperactivity, irritability.
2. Check to see if the victim is breathing. If not, call an ambulance or the police immediately, loosen clothing around the neck and perform CPR.
3. Take these first-aid actions immediately: call poison control center, emergency room and/or doctor; cover victim with blanket—loosen tight clothing; do not give food, drink, alcohol or drugs; save and give doctor the poisonous substance, container and label.



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