

# Safe at Home



*Guidelines to help keep your family,  
home and community safe.*

## What is a Break & Enter?

*A break and enter is a serious crime that affects you and your community. It is hard to prove who committed a break and enter even if they are found with the stolen goods. Many residential break and enters are not solved as most happen when people are away from their homes at work or on vacation. This makes it difficult for the police to know when the crime occurred.*

*The City of Saskatoon Neighbourhood Safety - Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is one group that is working to help lower the number of break and enters that happen in Saskatoon. This booklet contains important information that will help you make your home and community safer. Please review the checklist with your family and keep the booklet in a place you will all remember. Being prepared is the best defense to keep your home, your neighbours' homes, and your community safe.*

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## What you can do to make you and your home safe

### GET INVOLVED WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

- Get to know your neighbours and look out for each other.
- Keep an eye on your neighbourhood and report any suspicious activities (see page 11 for signs of suspicious activity).
- Write down the licence plate numbers of suspicious vehicles and descriptions of suspicious persons in the neighbourhood. Call the police as soon as possible with this information.
- Tell your neighbours if something unusual happens at your home or you notice anything strange around the neighbourhood. The more neighbours watching, the more uncomfortable you will make it for an intruder.



- Join your Community Association. This is a group of people that work together to make your area safer and they always welcome new volunteers. To learn more about joining, call 975-3378.
- When you are away on a trip or gone for a long period of time, leave your keys with a trusted neighbour who can watch your house and keep it safe.

### WHAT A CRIMINAL MIGHT SEE

- Do not make it clear that you live alone.
- When you are away on vacation, make your home looked lived in. This might mean asking a neighbour to turn your lights and radio on, open and close your curtains, water your plants, bring in your mail and flyers, mow your lawn or shovel the snow, and park in your driveway.
- Make your home look like there are many people and/or pets around by:
  - leaving a few toys in the yard
  - leaving a large pair of men's boots or shoes outside the door
  - putting a dog dish or leash outside and hanging a "Beware of Dog" sign to make it look like you own a dog
  - if you don't have a car, ask a neighbour to park in your driveway or in front of your house

### **CHANGE YOUR HABITS**

- Never open your door for strangers.
- When a stranger is at your door, be assertive and ask to see their identification.
- Have someone call your house every day.
- Do not leave notes that might say you are not at home.
- Change your routine occasionally to not be predictable.
- Never hide keys outside your home.
- Never keep large amounts of cash in your home.
- Leave the car in the garage when you load your luggage so that intruders will not know when you are going away.
- Temporarily suspend your newspaper or flyer deliveries when you are going away on holidays (call the StarPhoenix at 657-6320 to do this). If you are going away for a short period of time, have a neighbour pick up your mail.

### **PLAN AHEAD**

- Designate a “safe room” in your house where you can go when you feel you are in danger. It should have a phone and door that you can lock from the inside.

“ *Being prepared  
is the best defence  
to keep your home  
safe... ”*

- Engrave a special number, such as your licence plate number, on valuables which will make them easy to identify if recovered.
- Keep an up-to-date list of what you own, along with photographs and serial numbers of all your belongings.

- Check to make sure that your insurance covers all your valuables. You should have insurance that covers the full value of your jewellery (with a list and photos) and other possessions.
- Your jewellery is a favourite target for thieves because it is easy to carry and recognize, and is easily resold. It is a good idea to leave enough costume jewellery in your jewellery box or drawer (the first place they will look) to make thieves think they have found what they are looking for. Hide your valuable jewellery in an out-of-the-way place or locked in a safety deposit box.

### **CHECK YOUR WINDOWS**

- Make sure all of your sliding glass doors and windows have locks to prevent them from being lifted out of their tracks.
- Pay special attention to low or ground-level windows that are large enough for a person to fit through.
- Planting cactii or other thorny plants around windows may discourage intruders from entering.
- Install security film on windows to make them harder to break through.
- Pull down your blinds or drapes when it is dark.
- Put a piece of wood or doweling along the length of the window track to prevent it from being opened.

### **BE PHONE-SMART**

- Do not be afraid to call 911 in an emergency!
- Keep other emergency numbers handy (there is a place to put your emergency numbers at the back of this booklet).
- Have a phone close at all times. It is a good idea to have a phone jack installed by your bed.
- Purchase a cordless (not cellular) phone. Cordless phones have a direct 911 locator that shows police your address while cellular phones do not.
- Do not give out personal information to callers you do not know.
- If you use voicemail, do not provide information in your message that may let people know that you live alone or are out of town.
- Local phonebooks publish your name, address and telephone information each year. Consider listing only your last name and initial instead of listing your full name (ie. Doe, J. instead of Doe, Jane). You can also ask to remove your street address and only list your phone number and name. Call SaskTel at 310-7253 to make these requests.



### TURN ON YOUR LIGHTS

- Leave more than one light on inside of the house, in both the front and back.
- Program your interior lights to come on automatically at night.
- Leave your porch or outside light on all night (it only costs about 11 cents a month for a 5W compact florescent bulb which produces the same amount of light as a regular 20W incandescent bulb).
- Keep the areas around your doors and windows well lit, and consider installing motion sensor lights.
- Install a wire basket around any outdoor light bulbs so they cannot be removed.

### YOUR DOOR CAN PROTECT YOU

- All entrances need to be visible to neighbours. Tell your neighbour if you can't see their home clearly.
- Keep doors locked at all times, even when you are at home.
- Make sure to secure all entrances to your home with locks and deadbolts. Deadbolts should have a minimum 1" throw and a metal striker plate on the door frame. If you are not familiar with these terms, a locksmith or local hardware store should be able to assist you. Chain locks are not reliable.
- Your entrance doors should be at least 1-3/4" thick and solid. The door frame should be of solid construction and checked for dry rot or weakened areas.



- An entrance door opening outwards has hinges accessible from the outside. You can prevent their removal by flattening both ends of the hinge pins or by inserting a non-removable screw into the center of the pin.
- Install an oversized, wide-angle peephole at the proper height for easy use. This will allow you to see who is on the other side of your door without having to open it.
- A screen or storm door is not a reliable source of protection as the lock is easily broken.

**“ Keep doors locked at all times,  
even when you are at home. ”**

- Talk to a locksmith about extra door security devices that are available for your protection, such as:
  - a triangular doorstop
  - a simple door bar
  - a prop that fits under the doorknob such as a “Bronx Bar,” “Master Lock” or “Door Club”
  - for sliding glass doors available options are: an “anti-lift” device, auxiliary lock, or bar or screws in the track
- On little used doors, consider a 2’ x 4’ wood or steel bar across the entrance that slips into metal holders on either side of the door.
- Always change the locks when you move into a new home.
- The door leading to the house from your garage should be as solid as all other exterior entrances and equipped with the same type of safety lock.
- The garage door must always be kept closed. If you are away for a long time, consider padlocking the track.

## **AROUND YOUR HOUSE**

- Make sure your house number is visible both day and night. Brass house numbers are difficult to see at night, consider purchasing reflective or lit numbers instead. House numbers should also appear in the laneway if you have one, placed either on the fence or garage.
- Trim shrubs and trees to eliminate hiding places around the house perimeter.
- Lock up ladders lying around the yard which can be easily used to break in.
- Garden hose holders that are attached to the house can be used by intruders to step up to high windows. Move them away from windows if necessary.
- Consider getting a dog to scare away potential intruders. They do not want noise interrupting them while they are breaking into your home.
- It is best to install a chain link or open fence which will give police or neighbours a clear view of anything unusual on your property. A high, solid fence may be more difficult to climb, however it may also protect and hide anyone who is in your yard unlawfully.
- A warning buzzer on the fence gate can be linked to the house, letting you know whenever someone is entering your property.
- Fan or exhaust vents and other openings larger than 600 cm<sup>2</sup> should be secured with sturdy locking devices.
- Skylights should be as secure as possible. Consider installing a locking device similar to that on your doors.

# Self-Evaluation Safety Checklist

*The checklist is a summary of the booklet, and a quick reference on how to improve your safety. It points out the most popular identifiers that criminals look for in a victim and potential place to commit a break and enter crime. By completing this self-evaluation you will be able to identify what things or activities you may need to improve in your home and neighbourhood, and how to act or change your habits in order to increase your safety.*

Yes

No

Improve

## COMMUNITY

Do I know my neighbours?

Can I see my neighbours' homes clearly?

Do I look for suspicious activity?

Do I discuss suspicious activity with neighbours?

Do I report suspicious activity?

Do I generally know who lives in my area?

Does a trusted neighbour look after my house while I'm away?

Do I participate in my Community Association?

## HABITS

Do I look through the peephole before answering the door?

Do I have emergency numbers on hand?

Is there a spare key in an obvious place where criminals would find it (such as under a rock)?

Do I change my daily routine periodically?

Do I give out personal information to strangers?

Do I leave evidence that I am away from home (such as leaving a voicemail message that states I am away)?

Do I use my last name and first initial in the phone book?

Does someone pick up my mail and flyers when I am gone?

Do I pay attention to my surroundings?

## SIGNS

Do I 'advertise' that I live alone?

Does my home appear to be 'lived in' (for example, are there toys out front or a car parked in the driveway)?

Do I have items around the house that discourage criminals (for example a 'Beware of Dog' sign)?

Yes

No

Improve

### IN & AROUND MY HOME

Do I have a cordless phone at home?			
Do I have a list of emergency numbers if I need them?			
Do I put my lights on a timer while I am away?			
Are my windows and patio doors secure?			
Do I have proper and solid doors?			
Are my locks and security devices adequate?			
Are there places in my yard where someone could hide?			
Are all of the openings to my home secure (such as vents)?			
Have I made sure that my garage is safe and secure?			
Do I have proper exterior lighting?			
Are my house numbers clearly visible during the day and night?			
Have I removed any items from my yard that a criminal may use to help them (such as ladders, etc.)?			
Do I keep trees and shrubs trimmed away from windows and doors?			
Have I considered getting a dog for protection?			

### PLANNING AHEAD

Did I designate and prepare a 'safe room' in my home?			
Do I have a recent list, photographs and serial numbers of my valuables?			
Does my insurance cover all of my possessions?			
Do I hide my valuable jewellery in a safe place?			

### APARTMENTS & PARKING GARAGES

Do I know what security measures my apartment has?			
Is my balcony entrance secure?			
Do I wait for the next elevator if the occupant(s) make me uncomfortable?			
Do I pay attention to my surroundings while in parking garages (whether at home, work or at the mall)?			
Do I know the people that I am buzzing into my apartment?			
Do I participate in my Tennant Association?			

### CHILDREN

Have I taught my children how to answer the door and phone?			
Do my children know what to do while home alone?			
Do my children know to keep the doors locked at home?			
Do my children know where the emergency numbers are?			

## APARTMENT SAFETY

- If you live in a rental building, the building manager is usually responsible for security. If you live in a condominium, suite security is your responsibility and the condominium corporation is responsible for security in common areas.
- Make yourself familiar with your building's security measures.
- Your apartment or condominium building is a miniature neighbourhood or community and it is important to get to know your neighbours. Many of the points identified under "Get Involved with Your Community" (page 1) are also important to know for apartment living. You can help make your building safer by paying attention to suspicious people, joining your Tennant Association or creating one if it does not already exist, and taking an active role in your community.
- Always lock your main door and balcony doors when you are away from home.
- Make sure you know who you are letting into the building and remind them to close the door behind themselves. Intruders will sometimes buzz different suites until someone lets them in.
- *You can help keep your building secure by:*
  - Reporting security concerns or problems to the building manager or landlord.
  - Telling your building manager if you have problems with closing or locking windows and doors so they can fix the problem.
  - Reporting burnt-out and broken lights in common areas.
  - Not disabling security features in your building.
  - Not propping exit doors open.
  - Not holding the door open for a stranger to enter.
  - Telling your neighbours and building management when you are planning to have work done to your apartment or going to be away.
- By being aware and prepared you can reduce the safety risks in both your suite and your building.

## ELEVATOR SAFETY

- Look and see who is in the elevator before entering. If you feel uncomfortable, **do not enter the elevator** and wait for the next one.
- If a suspicious person enters the elevator, leave before the door closes.

## **PARKING GARAGES**

- The best time to use parking garages is during periods of high use or when they are busy.
- Watch for suspicious persons as you enter a parking garage. Turn around and drive out if you feel that you are in danger or do not feel safe.
- Park in well-lit areas as close to exit doors and/or the elevator as possible.
- Always walk through the centre of the garage lanes if possible.



- Report dark corners, problem areas, burnt-out lights or other concerns to building management.
- These safety tips are important for any parking structure you may use whether in your apartment or condominium, at work or at the mall.

## **IS AN ALARM FOR YOU?**

- Alarm systems are not for everyone.
- Taking action on the many suggestions provided in this booklet will help you make your home safer.

*If you choose an alarm system:*

- Learn as much as possible about alarms by asking people who have them and contacting the Better Business Bureau to find out which local alarm companies are registered. Request a price quote from at least three different alarm companies to make sure you are receiving a fair price. Keep the contact information of your alarm company in a safe place to assist police if needed.
- If you have specific concerns or physical challenges consider a personal or panic alarm to carry with you at all times.
- When you are at home leave the alarm activated for entrances.
- All alarm systems should feature an auxiliary power source to keep protecting you even during a power failure.



## KEEP YOUR CHILDREN SAFE WHILE HOME ALONE

- Teach your child to answer the phone just as they would if you were home. Have them inform the caller that “no one can take your call right now” and you will call them back. Here are examples to practice together: “My mother will phone you back as soon as she is finished with my baby brother. Thank you. Good bye.” Some intruders try to see who may not be home by phoning the house first. If no one answers, they think no one is home and may attempt a break-in.

- Instruct your child not to open the door when someone rings the doorbell. Instead, they should stand by the door and yell for their parents so that the person on the other side can clearly hear them. For example, “Mom, someone is at the door”. The person at the door may ring again because they know someone is home, but they will eventually go away. Some intruders will knock on doors and ring doorbells to check if anyone is home.
- Let your child know that it is very important to lock the doors when they come into the house.
- If your child hears someone entering the home, they should know to go to a safe place in the house and phone 911 immediately.



**“ Taking action on the many suggestions provided in this booklet will help make your home safer. ”**

## SIGNS OF SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY

- Someone that you do not know is entering a neighbour's yard and then disappearing.
- Someone that you do not know is parking a vehicle and walking an unreasonable distance away for no reason.
- A door or window appears broken when no one is home.
- A door-to-door canvasser or salesperson is only going to houses that appear to have no one at home.
- A vehicle looks suspicious or has untrustworthy occupants inside.
- A vehicle that you do not recognize is parked in an alley.
- A person is hanging around a property for no apparent reason.

## REPORT SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY

Call 975-8300 to report what you see. When you call, remember to:

- Speak slowly and clearly
- Give the location of the activity
- Give the details of the incident
- Give your name, address and phone number
- Give descriptions of persons involved including height, weight, clothing, gender, etc.
- Give a description of the vehicle involved including the type of vehicle, number of doors, colour, visible damage, licence plate number, etc.
- Give the direction of travel of persons or vehicles involved

## IF YOU ARE IN DANGER

- Remain calm.
- A forced door or window is a warning that someone may have broken into your home. Do not enter the house as thieves may still be inside. Instead, go to a neighbour's home and call the police.
- If you notice the break-in once you have entered your house, do not touch anything, leave immediately and call the police from a neighbour's home.
- **Do not confront the intruder.** Protect yourself by staying out of his or her way and cooperating with them. Your life is more important than your valuables, so keep yourself safe!

- **Your best defense is being a good witness.** Here are some tips on how you can do this:
  - **LOOK** for details about the intruder's appearance: Do they have any unique features such as a large nose, tattoos and/or visible scars? What are they wearing?
  - **LISTEN** to what they say: Do they mention any names? Do they have an accent or distinct voice (deep or high-pitched)?
  - **SMELL:** Do you smell tobacco smoke, alcohol or after-shave?
  - **TOUCH:** What would their clothing feel like - leather, knit, jeans, vinyl, etc?

### **WHAT TO DO AFTER A BREAK & ENTER OCCURS**

- Dealing with a break and enter can be very stressful, so be sure to take care of yourself both physically and emotionally.
- If you are frightened, get someone to stay at your home with you or stay at a friend's or with a family member.
- Talking about the experience is a very good way to relieve your feelings. Family and friends can be a great support.
- Children need special attention at this time as they may be frightened and need to know that their home is a safe place. Encourage your children to talk about their feelings.
- Get plenty of sleep, eat regularly and exercise. This will help you cope more easily with the stress of the break and enter.
- The signs of stress on you and your family, such as difficulty sleeping, depression or anxiety, will fade with time. In the meantime, you may want to see your family physician for advice or a referral for counseling.
- Ask Victim Services to do a security check on your home and to talk with you about ways that you can protect yourself. These precautions will make you feel safer and that you have some power to protect yourself.
- You will have to cooperate with the police and may also have to go to court. The police will ask you questions as part of their investigation. If they find the person who they think is responsible for the crime, you may have to go to court as a witness. This can be a confusing and frightening experience. There are services available to provide you with information, practical help and emotional support. You may be able to get your property returned or compensation from the offender. For more information please contact Victim Services at 975-8400.



## IMPORTANT NUMBERS

Emergency  
911

Saskatoon Police Services  
975-8300

Victim Services  
975-8400

Community Associations  
975-3378

Neighbourhood Safety - Safe Growth & Crime Prevention  
Through Environmental Design (CPTED)  
975-3340

StarPhoenix Home Delivery  
657-6320

SaskTel  
310-7253

For more information about how to keep your  
home, family and community safe, contact:

Neighbourhood Safety - Safe Growth & Crime Prevention  
Through Environmental Design (CPTED)  
City of Saskatoon, Planning Development Branch  
222 - 3rd Avenue North  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7K 0J5  
975-3340



[www.saskatoon.ca](http://www.saskatoon.ca)