

# SAFETY CORNER

A home is robbed every 14.6 seconds and the average dollar loss per burglary is \$2,119, according to statistics just released by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. And that's the good news because burglaries were down slightly in 2010 compared to 2009. Sure you lock your doors and windows when you're not home (you'd be surprised how many people don't). But here are ten things that you're probably doing that make your home a target, and what you should do instead:

1. Leaving your garage door open or unlocked. Once inside the garage, a burglar can use any tools you haven't locked away to break into your home, out of sight of the neighbors. Interior doors between the garage and your home often aren't as strong as exterior doors and may not have deadbolt locks.

**Instead:** Always close and lock the garage door. Consider getting a garage-door opener with random codes that automatically reset.

2. Hiding spare keys. Burglars know about fake rocks and leprechaun statues and will check under doormats, in mailboxes, and over doorways.

**Instead:** Give a spare set to a neighbor or family member.

3. Storing ladders outdoors or in unlocked sheds. Burglars can use them to reach the roof and unprotected upper floor windows.

**Instead:** Keep ladders under lock and key.

4. Relying on silent alarm systems. Everyone hates noisy alarms, especially burglars. Smart thieves know that it can take as long as 10 to 20 minutes for the alarm company or cops to show up after an alarm has been tripped.

**Instead:** Have both silent and audible alarms.

5. Letting landscaping get overgrown. Tall hedges and shrubs near the house create hiding spots for burglars who may even use overhanging branches to climb onto your roof.

**Instead:** Trim any bushes and trees around your home.

6. Keeping your house in the dark. Like overgrown landscaping, poor exterior lighting creates shadows in which burglars can work unobserved.

**Instead:** Replace burned out bulbs promptly, add lighting where needed, and consider putting fixtures on motion sensors or light sensors so that they go on automatically.

7. Not securing sliding doors. These often make tempting targets.

**Instead:** When you're out, put a dowel down in the channel, so that the door can't be opened wide enough for a person to get through.

8. Relying on your dog to scare away burglars. While barking may deter amateurs, serious burglars know that dogs may back away from someone wielding a weapon, or get chummy if offered a treat laced with a tranquilizer.

**Instead:** Make your home look occupied by using timers to turn lights, radios, and TVs on and off in random patterns.

9. Leaving "goody" boxes by the curb. Nothing screams "I just got a brand new flat-screen, stereo, or other big-ticket item" better than boxes by the curb with your garbage cans.

**Instead:** Break down big boxes into small pieces and bundle them together so that you can't tell what was inside.

10. Posting vacation photos on Facebook. Burglars troll social media sites looking for targets.

**Instead:** Wait until you get back before sharing vacation details or make sure your security settings only allow trusted "friends" to see what you're up to.