

Seattle Police Email Community Newsletter

April 20, 2011



Dear Community Friends:

We are continuing our series of security tips for your home to help deter residential burglaries. For this newsletter, we're going to focus on window security with additional tips for sliding glass windows and doors.

Windows are a primary point of entry used by burglars. Without question, window security is a **must**. In terms of security, windows pose the greatest problem. Windows are left unlocked and open more often than doors. An open window, visible from the street or alley, may be the sole reason for your home to be selected by a burglar. The best window security advice is this: **anytime you are away from home, close and lock your windows.**

- Ground floor windows are more susceptible to break-ins and should be given priority for security improvements.
- Upper floor windows become attractive if they can be accessed from a stairway, tree, fence, ladder, or by climbing on balconies.
- Windows have latches, not locks, and therefore should have secondary blocking devices to prevent sliding them open from the outside.
- Windows that are painted shut do not keep burglars out. Burglars often pry these open.
- Keep expensive equipment and items away from your windows.
- Use curtains or blinds over any windows or doors that are easy to see into.

Window Security

Before investing time and money on window security, consider that in the event of a fire, you may need to open a window in order to escape. Additionally, older windows are often constructed of aluminum or wooden frames that contain very thin glass panels. More recent construction features vinyl windows with thermal insulated, double or triple-pane glass. These are much more durable, more difficult to breach and are more energy efficient. If your home has the older aluminum or wooden framed windows with single pane glass, consider replacing them with the vinyl double or triple-pane glass windows.

Double Hung Windows

These usually have a top half that can be lowered and a bottom half that can be raised. A latch is situated in the center where both halves overlap.

Burglars often gain entry prying the latch and lifting the window, or they break the glass, reach in and undo the latch.

Solutions:

- If the window is not being used as a fire escape or for ventilation, secure by nailing or screwing it permanently closed.
- Replace the latch with a keyed latch.
- Consider using "sash pins." With the window closed, drill a hole in each corner of the inside sash on a slightly downward slant and continue into the second sash about half way. Do not go all the way through the second sash. Insert a sash pin (two types are pictured here) or as an alternate, insert a long nail, Allen wrench (which are easy to remove) or eye bolt in each one. A second set of holes can be drilled 5" above the first ones in the inside sash to allow the window to be pinned open for ventilation.



Casement Windows

These windows swing open and are hinged at the top, side or bottom. As with double hung windows, entry is usually gained by breaking a small piece of glass near the latch and reaching through to undo the latch or by prying the latch.

Solutions:

- If the window is not being used as a fire escape, place a protruding screw in part of the pivoting latch.
- Replace the latch with a keyed latch.

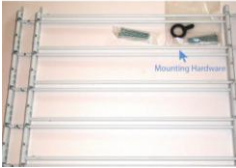


Alternatives to Window Glass - Plastic/Treated Glass and Security Film

Durable plastics or treated glass are effective alternatives. Durable security film can also be applied onto existing windows. Consult with a glazier for professional advice.

- Apply window film to make your glass shatterproof; tinted film can further prevent thieves from window-shopping and even block out UV rays so furniture won't be damaged by the sun.
- Frosting over windows is also a good option.

Metal Bars and Grillwork



These are very effective where windows are particularly vulnerable (e.g. secluded basement level windows). For windows that can be used as fire exits, interior release latches can be installed specifically for this purpose.

In sleeping rooms, these window-blocking devices should be capable of being removed easily from the inside to comply with fire codes.

Sliding Glass Doors & Windows

Sliding glass doors and windows are similarly constructed and share common security problems. They often have inadequate locking mechanisms that are easy to force open. Some older sliding glass doors and windows can be lifted off their track and defeat the latch mechanism.

Assess your glass doors and windows. Ideally, any glass doors in your home are double or triple-paned, heavy-duty laminated glass; if not, consider replacing them, or install window film and/or metal security grills on the doors.

To augment the latch/lock on your sliding door/window, we suggest you consider the following recommendations. However, before deciding on security measures, determine whether your door or window slides are on an inside or outside track.

To secure a door or window which slides on an Inside track:

- Install a snug fitting wooden or metal dowel into the bottom inside track to prevent the door or window from being opened from the outside if the lock is broken, or
- Purchase a "Charlie Bar," which is hinged and installed in the center of the window/door (lengths are adjustable).
- There are numerous locking and track-blocking devices that can be screwed down available in any good quality hardware store that will prevent a sliding door or window from being lifted or forced horizontally.
- Through-the-frame pins work well for vertical sliding windows. We will elaborate on this in the section regarding window security.

To secure a door or window which slides on an Outside Track

- Install a slide bolt along the bottom, inside track. Commercial locking devices are also available.

Security Measures Common To Both Inside and Outside Sliding Glass Doors and Windows:

- Secure the door/window using pins. First, inspect the point where the inner and outer frames overlap. If it permits for drilling (without the possibility of breaking the glass), drill a downward angled hole completely through the inner frames halfway into the outer frame. Insert into the hole a sturdy pin or nail that fits snugly (be sure the nail/pin is long enough so you can remove and reinsert it when needed). This method will prevent the door/window from sliding.
- If your sliding door or window can be lifted out of the lower track, this means that there is more head space in the upper track than necessary. To prevent this, insert large flat-head sheet metal screws into the top track at both ends and in the middle. Adjust screws so that the sliding portion of the door or window clears when it is slid shut.
- Like sliding glass doors, anti-lift devices are necessary for ground level and accessible aluminum windows that slide horizontally. The least expensive and easiest method is to install screws half-way into the upper track of the movable glass panel to prevent it from being lifted out in the closed position.
- Track locks are also a very effective method of preventing sliding doors and windows from being forced opened. You can install these to also allow for the window to be opened far enough for ventilation, but not wide enough for someone to gain entry.



Until next time, Take Care and Stay Safe!

Mark Solomon, Crime Prevention Coordinator, mark.solomon@seattle.gov, 206.386.9766