



HOME SECURITY BASIC SURVEY GUIDELINES



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Garda National Community Policing Unit



INTRODUCTION

Most householders have, at some time, felt the fear of crime, with the elderly and vulnerable most at risk. It makes sense to tackle crime in an effective way by reducing and preventing crime before it happens. Traditionally the Gardaí have been seen as the experts, but every organisation and householder, by working together with the Gardaí, can do their bit to reduce and prevent crime in their homes and reduce the fear of crime.

The crime of burglary causes fear in communities. The threat of being a victim of crime in the home is bad enough, but to be subjected to crime a second or even more times further increases the fear of the victim and other householders in the area.

Opportunistic criminals are easily able to identify inadequately secured homes. What they are looking out for is shown in the diagram below.

What opportunities do burglars look for in houses?





The aim of this guide is to help Community Gardaí carry out basic site surveys and give basic crime prevention advice to domestic residents. This can be done with by using the Home Security Checklist Challenge provided in Appendix 1. A basic site survey can be carried out at the scene of a domestic burglary, when conducting victim call-backs or in the course of general engagement with home owners and occupiers.

For the purpose of this booklet the techniques shown here refer to a basic domestic survey but they are equally applicable to business, commercial and industrial premises. Note that surveys for these types of premises should be carried out by Divisional Crime Prevention Officers who are trained in this area.

THE TEN PRINCIPLES

The ten principles of crime prevention are given below. These principles should be be kept in mind when conducting surveys and/or giving crime prevention advice.

1 TARGET HARDENING

This involves making targets more resistant to attack or difficult to remove or damage.

Examples include:

- Fitting better doors, windows, shutters, window/door locks, and alarms to reduce burglary.
- Use of screens in banks and building societies.
- Repairing damage to property to reduce possibility of crime or repeat victimisation.

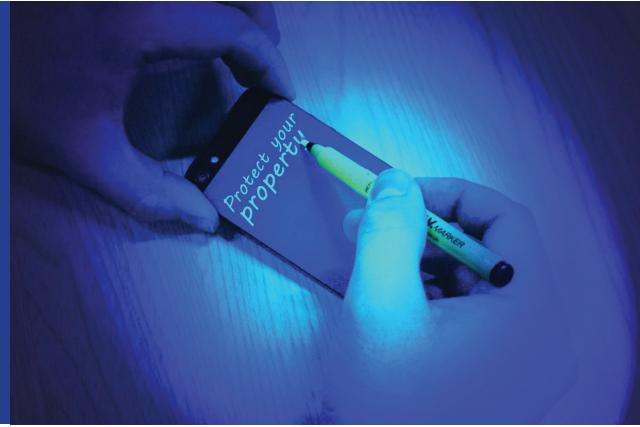
A target can be a person, place or property.

2 TARGET REMOVAL

This involves permanent or temporary removal of vulnerable persons or property.

Examples include:

- Replacing coin meters on gas and electricity systems in homes.



- Removing satellite navigation units from parked vehicles.
- Removing cash from tills and goods from shop windows at night.

3 REMOVING THE MEANS TO COMMIT CRIME

This involves promoting good housekeeping practices to ensure that material capable of being used to help the criminal is not left lying around with easy access.

Examples include:

- Keeping building material such as scaffold poles, tools, ladders, garden tools secured or stored in a safe place.
- Ensuring availability and access to the means to commit crime is restricted, for example by firearms and knife statutes and regulations.
- Use of plastic glasses in venues where there is a likelihood or potential for trouble or disorder.

In relation to domestic security this will mainly mean removing or locking up anything that would help an offender climb or use to break into a home.

4 REDUCING THE PAYOFF

This means employing a means to reduce the value of loss if a crime is committed.

Examples include:

- Property marking to make it less valuable and harder for the person who steals it to dispose of. If marked items are stolen it will also increase the chance of them being returned.
- Use of signs at the front and rear of a home to warn any potential offenders that all property is marked and identifiable. It is also important that the householder has correct insurance cover for the property within the home.
- Use of a main safe plus a time lock floor safe to reduce cash value in the till.
- Use of replica goods for display purposes.



5 ACCESS CONTROL

This involves restricting access to sites, buildings or parts of sites or buildings. This could apply, for example, to a block of flats, student accommodation or a house of multiple occupation (e.g. bedsits) as well as commercial properties.

Examples include:

- The installation of entry phones or proximity card readers or similar systems as a way to control access.
- Encouraging residents/ workers to close doors and refuse entry to any suspicious person.

6 VISIBILITY/SURVEILLANCE

This means making sure that offenders would be visible if they carry out a crime.

This principle has three elements:

- Natural - maximising routine surveillance by residents, employees and the community by ensuring that natural sight lines are unimpaired. (Pruning or removal of shrubbery, improving or installing lighting, increasing usage of areas.)
- Formal - using technology and staff to deter and identify potential and actual offenders. (deployment of security staff, store detectives, caretakers, utilising monitored alarm and CCTV Systems)
- Informal-encouraging communities and non-specialist staff in businesses to be vigilant. Procedures should be put in place to tell residents what to do if they see anything suspicious. It might involve encouraging residents to make more use of the facilities in the area so that there are more people around. (Neighbourhood Watch, Business Watch, passers-by, post/delivery persons, receptionists, counter staff, till operators. managers etc. are all examples of this.)



7. ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

This involves making changes to the environment of a building, a site, an estate or town, to reduce crime opportunities. Designing out opportunities for crime is considered in the early stages of the planning process but it also applies to existing environments.

Examples include:

- Pedestrianisation of shopping areas in towns.
- Working with developers, design of bollards, street furniture, removing alleyways, gating schemes etc.

This is known as Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED)

8 RULE SETTING

This involves the introduction of legislation, by-laws and codes of conduct, which set out what is acceptable behaviour.

Examples include:

- Reporting to reception and signing in of visitors and wearing of ID badges.
- Local rules regarding consumption of alcohol in the street or public places.
- Internal rules within businesses, commerce, public service, signs prohibiting access etc.
- It is important that if there are local watch schemes (Neighbourhood Watch, Business Watch, etc.) operating that there are clear signs making people aware of it.

9 INCREASE THE CHANCE OF BEING CAUGHT

This refers to anything that slows down offenders or increases their risk of being caught. This covers a variety of aspects, some of which have already been covered in the other principles. Combining several preventive methods can create an effective deterrent; slowing down potential offenders, making them more visible, making sure that security systems are effective, alerting potential offenders to the fact that there are security systems being used and publicising successes in detecting offenders.



10 DEFLECTING OFFENDERS

This involves diverting offenders and potential offenders from committing crime and working with other agencies to influence standards, thinking and attitudes.

This can be accomplished by using educational programmes, addiction service workers, youth workers, youth groups and organisations, providing training and work experience, Garda Youth Diversion Projects, Garda Youth Diversion Programme Garda Schools Programme.

ADVISING RESIDENTS AND OCCUPIERS

Most of the advice you will give follows at least one of the Ten Principles. When you give advice, it is important that anything you suggest, or implement is:

- Appropriate -if the risk is small, a simple solution will be appropriate. The higher the risk the more that will need to be done.
- Realistic - make sure that whatever you suggest or implement tackles the problem, or any foreseen problem.
- Cost effective-the cost of whatever you suggest or implement should be in proportion to the risk and affordable for the householder.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

When you give advice you have a duty of care to the householder. The advice you give should:

- Cover any legislation which might apply meet any insurance requirements.
- Avoid misleading or ambiguous advice. Never endorse any products.
- You should record and keep details of surveys.

Legislation that should be considered includes:

- Occupiers Liability Act 1995
- Building regulations



- Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005
- Criminal Law (Defence and the Dwelling) Act 2011
- Private Security Services Act 2004

THE ONION PEELING PRINCIPLE

The technique employed in all security surveying, however large or small, is called the 'Onion Peeling Principle'. This simply means starting at the outside and working inwards to the risk target (what the potential offender might want to damage or steal).

In practice this involves some preparation before visiting the site. When at the site you then survey each layer starting from the environment (outside the perimeter/boundary) and working in to the centre of the area that is to be protected (the interior).

This process applies to every type of site from a house with gardens through to an industrial unit. Obviously, on some sites the layers can be condensed. For example, in a bedsit the boundary would be the fabric of the shared house and the shell would be the door/windows of the room. You should bear in mind that a target can be in any of the layers. Anything might be a target including valuables contained in the property such as jewellery or electrical equipment, motor vehicles or cycles that can be kept on the street, in a drive or in a garage, the lawnmower or tools in the shed.

At each layer the aim is to delay and/or deter the offender, protect (or if possible remove) any potential targets, make it more difficult for the potential offender to attack the property and give the maximum amount of surveillance.



PREPARING TO SURVEY

By doing a little research about the environment and location of the site before you give advice, your approach will be more professional.

Preparation gives householders confidence that carrying out your advice will benefit them. It will give them more peace of mind, increase the security of their home and reduce their chance of becoming victims of crime.

For example when undertaking a domestic survey consider:

- Has there been any recent crime in the area?
- Do you know if this particular home, or one nearby, has been burgled?
- What types of home are there?
- What type of people live in the area?
- Is there a Neighbourhood Watch/Community Alert/Text Alert scheme, or other residents' group in the area?

All these points influence the advice you offer and how you offer it. It is useful to make some notes, take photographs or make a sketch of your survey site. This will help you identify priorities for immediate action and give the owner/occupier record of your advice.

Note: The overall impression of the home will influence whether it is targeted by a potential offender. As a general rule, if it looks like there is someone in the home the potential offender is likely to go elsewhere.

THE BOUNDARY/PERIMETER

When you arrive at the site, take a good look at the outside of the property before you enter. Consider what you have learned from your preparation and how it might apply to this particular site.

Start at the outside and, with the owner/occupier, walk round the whole of the perimeter. Check



fences, gates, shrubbery and hedges. Look for possible hiding areas, or easy ways of gaining entry. Check for good visibility from surrounding houses and roadways.

Low boundaries at the front, 1m, give maximum visibility. High walls or fences of 1.8m at the rear provide good security. To maintain this private secured area, side entrances should be secured with lockable gates. If possible, gates should be fixed with the hinges attached to the shell of the building. Their height should match that of the rear fence so that any burglar attempting to climb or force the gate will be seen from the road or nearby houses. Make sure the hinges are secure and that the gate cannot simply be lifted off them.

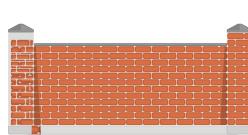


Good lighting is also essential to deter the burglar. It also gives security to any welcome visitors to the house. Constant light such as street lighting should be provided at the front. Ideally low level dusk to dawn lights (with photoelectric cells) should be used in the rear.

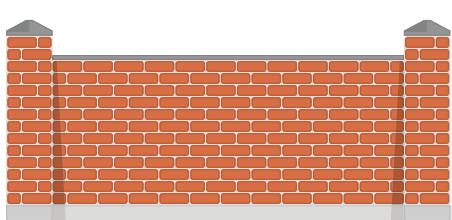
THE SHELL/HOME

The shell of building is the main fabric of the building, the walls, roof, external doors and windows. If entry points are weak with little or no security then the shell can be easily broken, and once inside the intruder is out of sight and out of mind. The basic idea is to introduce measures that will delay and deter offenders.

The longer burglars are visible from outside, and the more noise made breaking in, the easier it is for them to be detected. More noise and more time are the burglar's enemies.



Low Boundary in front.
1m for maximum visibility.



High boundary at rear . 1.8m
provides good security.

Make sure that valuables aren't visible from outside

Start where you think the burglar will break in. Usually it is a ground floor rear window.



WINDOWS

Check the windows from the inside and outside.

Are they wood, metal or (u)PVC? Are the frames in good condition?

Whether the window is wood or metal you will find an inexpensive window lock to fit each type. There are a variety of specialist locks to fit to (u) PVC windows (they are slightly more expensive but are designed specifically for this type of window). These should be fitted by a specialist. Windows with a high level of security will be made to a standard such as PAS 24 .

Make sure you inform the householder to fit any lock correctly and in a position where it will have the most effect and strength. A burglar with the right tools will break through a window lock eventually, but fitting one in the correct manner will force the burglar to take more time and make more noise. Many forced entries involve breaking the glass to make further entry. Fitting laminated glass to vulnerable windows makes it difficult to break and it will take longer to make a hole.



Note: Toughened glass is for safety which should not be confused with security.

When you have checked the windows you feel will be the first attack point, go to the others that are accessible to the burglar, especially those upstairs with access from flat roofs and drain pipes. Consider anti-climb deterrents, such as anti-climb paint, to stop easy entry. Do not forget the garage windows. This is more important if the garage is attached to the house with an internal door leading to the inside of the house. Any internal door should be to exterior door standards with appropriate locking systems.



DOORS

Next, look at door security. First focus on external doors. These include french windows, patio doors and internal garage doors. External doors should be certified to a recognised standard such as PAS 24. Deal with the back or rear doors first. Before checking the locks, have a good look at the framework around the doors. It should be securely fixed and in good condition otherwise



good doors or locks are useless. Also, check the condition of the door, including its thickness. If you recommend a mortice lock for a door that is too thin it will weaken it. Doors must be at least 44mm (1 3/4") thick for a mortice lock to be fitted. If the door is too thin then a rim dead lock should be fitted.

DOOR PANELS

Some lower door panels are fitted with thin timber material that offers little resistance if attacked. Consider replacement with a good quality external plywood panel, or bars fitted to the inside of the door panel and painted the same colour as the door.

FRONT DOORS

The front door is usually the final exit point. Ideally it should be secured in a minimum of two places. The locking system will depend on the type of door i.e. wooden, (u)PVC, composite. Check that locking systems are located away from vulnerable glass so that if the glass is broken a burglar cannot reach in and open the door. Most modern (u)PVC doors are fitted with multi point locking systems.

Wooden doors - Any lock fitted to the edge of the door is only as good as the screws and the framework holding it on. A good kick or shoulder push may be sufficient force to break the locking system.

If the door is at least 44mm (1 3/4") thick, a five-lever mortice deadlock can be added to the door. If the door is not thick enough to have a mortice deadlock, the night latch should be changed to a rim deadlock or a rim automatic deadlock. These are much stronger than the rim night latch and have a deadlocking facility to prevent opening from the outside by breaking the glass and releasing the catch.

DOOR VIEWERS & CHAINS

Do not forget door viewers, chains or bars for personal security. Letterbox cages are also useful for preventing interference to locks.



PATIO DOORS

Patio doors have a good expanse of glass so once opened, considerable amounts of property can be removed through them. Sometimes the hook lock fitted is quite poor. To secure sliding glass panels at least one; preferably two patio door locks should be fitted to give support the hook lock. Another method of entry used by burglars to break through these doors is use a spade as a lever under the bottom rail of the sliding panel. This lifts the door from the bottom channel and pulls the whole door away. Most modern patio doors have an 'anti-lift device' fitted into the top channel of the door which prevents the door being lifted from the bottom channel if upward pressure is applied.



To check whether patio doors can be lifted, open the patio door and holding the handles lift the door upwards. If there is excessive movement then an anti-lift device needs to be fitted into the top channel.

LOCKS

Mortice locks

Wooden doors - five-lever mortice dead locks or sash locks should be fitted. This type of lock is much stronger and more secure. The same recommendation applies to side doors and internal garage doors. If the door is at least 44mm (1 3/4 ") thick, so much the better. Ideally there should be three points of resistance to rear, side and internal garage doors. The five - lever mortice dead lock is fitted in the centre and you should further recommend that these doors have two mortice security bolts. Each should be fitted 150mm (6") from the top and bottom of the door.



Mortice bolts

These bolts operate from the inside face of the door and would offer very strong additional protection. Wooden french windows are particularly vulnerable. They can be secured by using mortice security bolts and a five-lever mortice lock. Mortice security bolts can only be operated with a key and are far stronger than sliding bolts fixed onto the inside face of the french





windows which can easily be unlocked by breaking the glass and reaching through. A mortice security bolt is embedded into the doorframe and resists forcing and kicking. Even if the burglar breaks the glass, mortice bolts cannot be unbolted.

French windows need five locking points. These are a five lever mortice deadlock in the centre and four mortice security bolts, two on each opening leaf, one at the top and one at the bottom. These replace the sliding bolts usually fitted.

Some doors open outwards and their hinges are exposed and vulnerable to attack. Hinges can be protected by a simple device called a hinge bolt. Normally one hinge bolt per hinge is recommended. Hinge bolts prevent the door from opening or being pulled away if the hinges themselves are attacked and removed. Hinge bolts can also be considered for all outward opening external doors where hinges are exposed, and are vulnerable to attack.

OUTER BUILDINGS

The first place that many burglars look is in sheds, garages or outbuildings. Usually they are not as securely built as the home and are often located where visibility is poor which can make them an easier target. They often contain a ready source of tools for breaking into the main section of the house. Treat them like the shell of the house, try to make the burglar take more time and make more noise. If you are unable to adequately secure them with mortice locks, use padlocks or lockable bolts. Windows should, ideally, be secured by window locks. Windows can even be covered with external ply boards and firmly secured with mushroom headed bolts through the fabric of the walls.

Garage doors should be lockable or secured by padlocks. Where internal doors are used for entry from the garage into the house, a simple method of security for up and over doors is to drill a hole in the top channel above the wheels and insert a padlock into the hole. This prevents the wheel moving above the padlock so keeping the door closed during forced entry. If there is no internal door from the garage to the house then the up and over doors can be secured by an outer bracket and floor eyelet welded or bolted to the bottom of the door and secured by a padlock inserted into the floor eyelet.

Finally: advise people to secure tools and garden implements with locks. Suggest they property mark prominently and permanently. Remind them not to leave car keys in the garage with the car.



INTERNAL SECURITY

Most houses these days have property inside which is attractive to the opportunist criminal: cash, jewellery, games consoles, personal computers, small electrical items etc. Some of these items can be hidden from view so, once inside, the criminal will have to make time to search. Find out which vulnerable items are kept in the house. Find out about items of monetary value, and sentimental value too. Check to see what steps, if any, have been taken to protect them.

Advise the occupier to prepare an inventory of all items of value. This is usually done for insurance purposes. The inventory should include descriptions of items and their value. Colour photographs of property are useful and are invaluable for Garda purposes in circulating stolen property descriptions. In fact whole display cabinets can be photographed. For individual items try to include a ruler in the photograph to give some indication of size.

Every item of property should be permanently property marked. One cheap but effective method is the use of an ultra violet pen or marker. This can be used on wood, metal, pottery or canvas, but fades in time and can also be removed by constant polishing so marks need to be rewritten on a regular basis.

Engraving, etching or ceramic marking may also be appropriate for other items such as equine tack or valuable pottery. Before permanently marking expensive items, expert advice should be sought to ensure that this will not reduce the value of the item or damage it.

Large amounts of cash and expensive jewellery should not be kept in the house unless adequately protected. The occupier's insurance company should be consulted about these items and their protection.

There should be signs at the front and rear of the home to warn any potential offenders that all property is marked and identifiable. Property marking reduces the offender's chances of selling the stolen object and it could also implicate the offender in the crime if he or she is found with the goods by the police.

Note: When there's someone at home, safety is more important than security. Advise the householder seek additional advice on fire proofing and installing smoke detectors.



INTRUDER ALARMS

Opportunist burglars tend to avoid houses with an intruder alarm fitted. These are now more commonly known as security systems. If a home already has a security system you should check with the householder that it is serviced regularly and that it offers the protection they want. If the home doesn't have a security system you should consider whether it would be appropriate, realistic and cost effective to have one installed.

If the householder has any concerns about an existing system, or they want to have one installed, they should seek expert advice from a reputable company and look for registered installers in their area.

Insurance premiums may be reduced if a security system is installed. You should advise the householder to check with their insurance company to see if there are any requirements that need to be fulfilled in order to benefit from reduced premiums.

SECURITY LIGHTING

Security lighting for domestic properties can be inexpensive and effective. Advice ranges from leaving lights on around the home in the evenings when the house is unoccupied, to installing low level dusk-to-dawn outdoor security lighting.

Inside the home, light sensitive switches, time switches or programmed switches are a good method of ensuring the house is lit at the right times. If the home is going to be unoccupied for most evenings and needs to be lit throughout this period consider using lower wattage, compact fluorescent bulbs. These bulbs fit into the standard home lighting fitting. They initially cost more, but use very little electricity and have a much greater life span. They give the same amount of illumination as an ordinary bulb of greater wattage so nothing is lost in terms of brightness. As with intruder alarms, expert advice should be sought for the more expensive security lighting systems.



SURVEY REVIEW

It is very important, if you can, to return to every site you survey. This will show you if your advice has been successful and made the site more secure, and, potentially, also reduced the fear of crime.

Every time you complete a domestic survey it should be thought of as part of a learning process. Your review will also provide a valuable source of information for the preparation of any other security surveys you do. It might also give you more knowledge of how best to give advice, which advice is acted upon and which is disregarded by the householder.

Each survey and review you conduct will give you more confidence. This will be evident to householders and will also help you feel more confident that the advice you give will help increase the security of their homes.

If you visit one home in a street try to speak to other people in the street or neighbourhood. This may save you time in the future and give you additional information about the neighbourhood. It might also help other householders feel more secure and give them more peace of mind knowing that someone is concerned about their security.

You will learn lessons from each follow up and it will be of use in preparing for other surveys




For more information visit www.garda.ie or contact your local Crime Prevention Officer.

HS1

A home security assessment is essential to identifying weaknesses in your physical security that might provide an easy opportunity for a crime to occur. While nothing can make your home absolutely burglar-proof, these checks are intended to create security layers that, if implemented, can serve to reduce criminal opportunity and make it more difficult to force entry into your home. A small investment of time and money can reduce your chances of being a victim of burglary.

Burglars like easy opportunities. If they have to make a lot of noise, spend a lot of time or risk being seen, the chances are they won't bother. A good rule of thumb is the 3 minute delay test. If you can deny entry for 3 minutes or more – it is likely the burglars will go elsewhere.

Complete this checklist challenge to determine how well your home is secured against burglary. Ignore questions not relevant to your own home. Remember, every NO answer is a threat to your home security.



Have you a reliable neighbour whom you can notify of your travel plans and give a key to, with a request for a periodic house check?

Yes No

Do you have a neighbour collect your mail or newspapers when you are away or do you avail of MailMinder from An Post?

Yes No

Do you have your neighbour park his / her extra car in your driveway when you are away from home?

Yes No

Do you arrange to have your lawn mowed?

Yes No

Do you notify the Gardaí of prolonged absences from your home?

Yes No

Are you a member of a community crime prevention scheme (Neighbourhood Watch, Community Alert etc)?

Yes No



Is your house number visible from the street?

Yes No

Is there sufficient illumination around your home to allow visible inspection of any dark areas around it?

Yes No

Is there sufficient external lighting outside every door to illuminate visitors?

Yes No

Do neighbours and passers-by have a clear view of your home?

Yes No

Have you trimmed all hedges and shrubs so they can't hide a burglar at work on the windows and doors?

Yes No

Have you ever walked around your house looking for ways a burglar might be able to get in?

Yes No

Do you keep tools or ladders etc. in places inaccessible to potential burglars?

Yes No

Are machines, tools and other high value items stored in garages or sheds securely padlocked or chained to prevent removal?

Yes No

Is your shed / garage secure?

Yes No



Doors & Windows



Yes No

Are all your external doors properly fitted and equipped with appropriate secure locking systems? (i.e. 5-lever mortice locks for wooden doors, multi-point locking for uPVC doors etc.)

If you have glass panelled doors – are they reinforced in some way so that they cannot be shattered?

Have you a wide-angled viewer in your front/main entrance doors or other means of viewing callers?

Do you have a door chain / limiter fitted and do you use it?

Since moving into your home (where there may have been a previous occupier) have you had the locks changed?

Are your spare keys kept with a trusted neighbour and never left under an external mat, flower pot etc?

Do you lock your external doors when away from home, no matter how short a time?

Do you lock the doors out of your view when working in the garden / yard?

Have you installed an additional lock(s) to your sliding glass / patio doors?

Are the garage / outhouse doors protected with quality locks or deadbolts?

Do you close and lock your garage /outhouse doors?

Are all your windows secure?

Can the window openings be restricted for ventilation?

Do you check to see if all windows are secured when you leave your home?

Electronic Security



Yes No

Do you have an intruder alarm system or CCTV system fitted and do you use it?

Do they conform to recognised International standards?

Is it maintained and serviced annually?

Do you know how to operate and use your alarm or CCTV system functions?

Have you considered connecting it to a monitoring centre or your mobile phone? (If your phone is out of coverage who will be notified in the event of an alarm)

Have you appointed a keyholder(s) and will they respond appropriately to an alarm activation?

Inside Security



Yes No

Do you ask for identification before allowing unknown tradespeople / callers into your home?

Do you avoid leaving cash at home?

Have you automatic timers on some lights when your house is vacant?

Does your home always look like someone is at home?

Have you recorded serial numbers of your valuables?

Have you, for identification purposes, photographed your valuables especially items for which you have no serial numbers such as jewellery, china, crystal, paintings, antiques etc?

Are your car / house keys kept in a location not visible from the outside?

