

Residential Burglary Crime Prevention

By

Lieutenant Brian Grigsby

Little Rock Police Department

Criminal Justice Institute

School of Law Enforcement Supervision

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Abstract

Residential burglary is one of the most common crimes in the world. Criminals are vigilant in their pursuit of the next target, so homeowners shouldn't make it easy for them. Homeowners can make their homes safer in most cases just by following some simple steps, and most of these are cost effective versus the alternative of being a victim of a residential burglary. My goals and objectives in writing this paper is to provide some research on residential burglary and give some tips to better safeguard homes in the process. Something as simple as closing a window or door and locking said window or door may be the key to successfully protecting a home from a burglary. Most of the practices and concepts I have researched while writing this paper center around common sense inexpensive ways to improve the security of the home. As I wrote this paper I tried to convey the common sense argument vs. spending a small fortune to secure the home. At any rate the choice is always up to the homeowner to be smart, vigilant, proactive and protected.

Introduction

What Constitutes Burglary in Arkansas?

Residential Burglary is a non-violent property crime. As I understand the Arkansas Criminal Code a person in Arkansas commits the crime of residential burglary by entering or remaining in a residence that belongs to another person without permission, intending to commit any other crime, such as assault or theft, while inside. With the number of violent crime offenses increasing and the limited amount of jail space, it is often hard to get offenders of these types of crimes off the streets for a significant period of time. This causes offenders to repeat offend, because it's what they know and do for a living. Most of the time the offenders have customers just like any major store and they go burglarizing homes, or shopping, to fill their customer's orders for money or to support their personal drug habits. Whatever the reason homeowner must be wise and consistent in their efforts to guard their homes.



This information comes out of the Arkansas Criminal Code Title 5 - Criminal Offenses Subtitle 4 - Offenses Against Property Chapter 39 - Burglary, Trespass, and Other Intrusions Subchapter 2 - Offenses Generally § 5-39-201 - Residential burglary -- Commercial burglary. (a) (1) A person commits residential burglary if he or she enters or remains unlawfully in a residential occupiable structure of another person with the purpose of committing in the residential occupiable structure any offense punishable by imprisonment. (2) Residential burglary is a Class B felony.

To Charge and Prosecute

In order for a prosecutor to get a conviction for residential burglary, they would have to show that a burglary occurred and, normally, a prosecutor must produce and successfully argue evidence on the following points, and convince a judge or jury beyond a reasonable doubt on each of them.

A Building or Structure

1. A prosecutor would have to prove the building or structure is being used as a residence.

In the past, burglary laws applied only when someone broke into another person's house.

Common laws of today prohibit anyone from entering into any structure, and not just a home. Several state laws identify the types of structures that count for residential

burglary crimes. Some of these include homes, tents, houseboats, trailer homes, and even homeless campsites. Certain states also differentiate between burglary of a residential burglary and commercial space, with residential burglary receiving harsher punishment.

For residential burglary, the building must be an apartment, home, or some type of structure in which a person lives. In Arkansas, if the building is used as a business, it is a commercial burglary. Also, if the building is a storage building, a vehicle or a vending machine, it is considered a breaking and entering offense. Breaking and entering is just another way to classify theft from somewhere that is not someone's home. In my book it is just as bad and should also be shielded against vigilantly.

The FBI 1st quarter crime numbers show that residential burglaries are actually down to 501 from 529 per 100,000 residents. Property Crimes are down overall to 7550

occurrences from 8464, which is an 11% decrease overall comparing 2016 to 2015. This

information comes

Information Based

NIBRS is an

enforcement

report their crime

Each burglary is

business, residence

			(Q)			(YTD)
CC Offences						
Violent Crimes (Total)	1669	1699	-2%	1669	1699	-2%
Homicide	2	3	-33%	2	3	-33%
Attempted Murder	10	13	-23%	10	13	-23%
Robbery	119	167	-29%	119	167	-29%
Sexual Offences	82	49	67%	82	49	67%
Assault	806	842	-4%	806	842	-4%
Abduction/Kidnapping	16	13	23%	16	13	23%
Property Crimes (Total)	7550	8464	-11%	7550	8464	-11%
Business B&E	268	331	-19%	268	331	-19%
Residential B&E	501	529	-5%	501	529	-5%
Total B&E (All)	918	964	-5%	918	964	-5%
Theft Motor Vehicle	834	970	-14%	834	970	-14%
Theft From Vehicle	2081	2070	1%	2081	2070	1%
Theft Over 5000	26	69	-62%	26	69	-62%
Theft Under 5000	1016	1540	-34%	1016	1540	-34%
Shoplifting	769	710	8%	769	710	8%
Stolen Property	92	138	-33%	92	138	-33%
Fraud (Total)	751	643	17%	751	643	17%
Identity Theft/Fraud	68	77	-12%	68	77	-12%
Arson	37	34	9%	37	34	9%
Mischief	1025	1322	-22%	1025	1322	-22%

from the FBI's National

Reporting System, or NIBRS.

incident reporting system law

departments use to collect and

information data to the FBI.

categorized based on if it was a

or a vehicle. At the Little

Rock Police Department we also track the type of entry that was used and if the door was unlocked.

Unlawful Entry

2. The fact that the accused unlawfully and without permission entered the building illegally is another fact the prosecutor must also prove. Thus, the building must be either a private one or a public one that was not open or otherwise publicly accessible. For instance, a person who enters a structure that's open to the public, but their intent is to commit a crime while inside, is illegal entry. An additional example of this would be a person who walks into a store with the intent to steal merchandise. The thinking behind this concept is that the owner's permission has been offered only to those who enter for legitimate reasons. When the criminal entered the business for illegal purposes, the owner's permission did not apply, and the entry became one without permission. The crime of burglary also requires that the suspect enter the building. If a person does not physically

enter, the crime still occurs if said person uses a tool to perform the illegal entry. An example of this would be using a drone or robot to break into and steal something.

Forcible Entry

3. Burglary in some states also involves “breaking” into a building. Usually any type of forced entry is enough to satisfy this requirement. Kicking the door in, prying the door open, and breaking the window all qualify as forced entry. It's also enough for an accused person to open an unlocked door or lift an unsecured window to satisfy the use of force requirement. Some states, however, have dispensed with the requirement that the suspect break in; thus, walking freely through a store entrance, intending to steal goods, can be a burglary which is classified as a Shoplifting offense in Arkansas. However, if a threat of force is implied during the Shoplifting, it is classified as a Robbery. An example of this would be someone is stopped in a store by an employee after they have concealed merchandise and the thief implies to use force, actually uses force or displays a weapon to escape. The crime is now a Robbery.

Intent to Commit a Felony

4. In order to get a conviction of burglary, a prosecutor must prove that the person entered the building with the intent to commit another crime. Usually, a person convicted of burglary intends to enter the building in order to steal something, though any felony (and, in some states, misdemeanor thefts) will satisfy this requirement. For example, it's still a burglary when a person enters with an intent to steal but later changes his mind. Conversely, entering without the intent to commit a crime, and making that decision after you've entered, does not constitute burglary. An example of this would be, a guest who

comes to a party with no illegal plans, but who sees any item, such as a piece of jewelry and at that moment decides to steal it, has committed theft but not burglary.

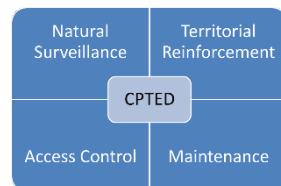
Prosecutors normally show criminal intent from the circumstances of the case, and do not have to show exactly what was in the accused person's mind at the time. If the person described above came to the home with a large empty bag, he would have a tough time defeating a burglary charge if he was caught leaving the home with property from the home. The person brought the bag to carry away stolen property, not because he likes to carry empty bags with him everywhere he travels. One problem I have seen with the crime of burglary is that, even with a conviction, the suspect may not spend very much time in jail, because it is a non-violent crime and the prisons are overcrowded. The overcrowding may mean early release for non-violent offenders, which is not a good thing for the home owners who depend on the legal system to protect them instead of defending their property themselves utilizing with smart choices. The next few sections will cover types of prevention home owners can utilize to protect themselves.

Proactive Prevention

Landscaping, Shrubbery and Lawn Appearance

Many home owners fail to realize that burglars shop around for houses to break into. To some burglars, overall appearance plays an important part in whether or not a home may be chosen to burglarize. It is important to keep the landscaping neat and well kept. There is a

concept called Crime Prevention through Environmental Design, or CPTED. A lot of the concepts. Landscaping,



Prevention through Environmental Design, or advice given in CPTED centers around these 4 the types of shrubs and overall lawn appearance

along with many other ideas are proactive measures in reference to CPTED. Some studies

suggest burglars will pass up a home that has well-kept landscaping and look for one that is not as polished. This principle of CPTED is known as natural surveillance. The burglar's theory is that if the home owner doesn't care about the exterior of the home's appearance, specifically landscaping, the home may be an easier target. Tall or thick shrubs or bushes provide cover for the burglars to conceal themselves while they break into the home, so the bushes and shrubs should be thinned out and there should be visibility below and or above the shrub or bush. Toys or bikes on the front lawn or in the driveway left unattended are signs that the homeowners are not paying attention to things that would attract burglars, and should keep these areas picked up and clean. If a burglar doesn't have to enter your home to steal expensive items left outside, this could be a sign of carelessness and may give the burglar an incentive to think he might not get caught if he enters the home. Another point of entry may be the upstairs level of a home. Trees could provide access to the upper level of a home. Homeowners must be vigilant in their placement and trimming of trees on their property as not to provide the means to get to the upper level. Lower branches should not be accessible from the ground if the tree is close to the home and, if climbed, could allow someone to enter the home easily from the second level. This type of set up is very dangerous and should be avoided at all cost. This CPTED principal is called maintenance. Keeping trees trimmed and placed properly on the property will make a significant difference in the safety of the home. It also helps if you have daughters that have second story windows and are accessible by the nearby tree branches to curious young boys full of testosterone pumping through their young bodies. In cases like this the only thing you can do is nail the windows shut and post a fire breathing dragon outside. I personally have beware of dog, and alarm system signs posted. I am considering quotes for an electrified fence because like a

burglar, a young boy's curiosity can be very difficult to defeat, especially if the object of his curiosity is a beautiful young girl. Pro-active prevention is the key to success.

Security Systems, Cameras and Signage

Security systems are a great deterrent to residential burglaries. Unfortunately, they aren't automatic and have to be activated in order to work properly. They can also sometimes have false alarms, which may be costly. Security systems should also be accompanied by cameras and signage whenever possible. It does a home owner no good to pay to have a security system installed



only to fail to activate it every time they leave or when they are at home and inside for an extended period of time. I personally have responded to several burglarized homes that had security systems but the home owner didn't activate the system before they exited the home. Security systems should also be tested on a regular basis to make sure they are functioning properly, because some cities charge home owners after a certain number of false alarms. The City of Little Rock has implemented a policy that charges homeowners after the third false alarm, and the charges are progressive if the false alarms continue. Cameras used to be a luxury addition to a security system, but with the advances in technology, the prices are more reasonable and cameras are becoming the norm in relation to home security systems. When choosing a camera to accompany the alarm, several factors should be taken into account. Placement of the camera can determine the best type of application for the job. If you are placing a camera inside the home, take into consideration of steps, open areas and hallways. Monitoring certain areas maximize the probability that a burglar's image will be captured on the camera and can possibly be described or identified from the video or still images. As cameras capture visual images, motion sensors may detect motion.

Motion sensors are a very important component to security systems and careful thought should be given on placement of these also. In today's age, motion sensor coverage can overlap the same areas as cameras, or capture what is outside of the camera or what the camera may miss. Motion sensors normally accompany every security system and the same consideration of placement should be given to these devices.

Windows, Doors and Locks

Windows are sometimes the weakest point of security for the home and, because of that, they are the second most chosen entry into the home. The door is the most common ways that burglars enter the home, according to crime prevention security systems www.cpss.net. The website goes on to say, and I agree, that most neighbors don't pay attention to glass breaking, and a huge number of home owners leave their windows unlatched or the locks are insufficient to keep the window from being defeated. So, like alarms, windows are not automatic and the latches on the window must be engaged to protect them from being opened. Another reason windows are chosen is because of the concealment factor. If the homeowner does not keep the trees, shrubs and hedges trimmed back away from the window, it will provide optimal concealment while the home is being broken into. During my 20 years of service, several of the burglaries that I have responded to involved the windows being left unlocked, open, or the plant life provided concealment and cover, which is the reason they were chosen to enter the home. Doors are another aspect of the home where home owners must be actively engaged in securing in order to provide optimal security. Exterior doors are normally wood or metal and have a solid core. The strike plate is a key point of the door. Strike plates come with 3/4" screws which do not provide enough strength at the latch portion of the door. This is the reason the burglar kicks by the door knob area of the door. A CPTED recommendation is that all screws in the strike

plates are replaced with 3” case hardened screws. The case hardened type of 3” screws go all the way through the frame and door jamb to the 2 x 4 inside the wall. This is a low cost upgrade that provides a much better defense at this point of the door and makes the door much harder to kick in. CPTED refers to this concept as target hardening, which simply means making the home more difficult to forcibly enter. Another target hardening point to the door would be the type of lock that is used. On the entry door there should always be a dead-bolt lock to accompany the door lock, and a chain or latch as well. If the door is properly installed and has the recommended screws, locks and security, it is almost impossible to kick in. A burglar would give up rather than continue to work on a point of entry that is hard to break into. Windows on the sides of the door are called side lights and though they add a decorative aspect to the door, they can sometimes be easily broken, and access to the door lock from there is relatively easy. If you have side lights, I would recommend you install a double cylinder dead-bolt lock rather than the standard single cylinder. A double cylinder dead-bolt lock is simply a lock with a key on both sides. A single cylinder dead-bolt lock has a key on one side and a latch on the other. It is also recommended that the dead-bolt have at least a 1 ½ inch solid throw. The throw is the part that plunges out when the lock is turned. The throw is what actually keeps the door closed.

Lighting

One would think that lighting only comes into play at night under the cover of darkness, and that would mostly be correct, but there are times during the day when lighting would need to be carefully thought out. If the area is a garage or storage and there are no windows or natural light, a motion light on a switch should be utilized. There are many different lighting applications, so I will attempt to focus on those that only apply to home security, as trying to cover them all could produce another research paper. As I was conducting research for this

paper I came across a website called Delmar fans. They have a blog called, “What is security lighting & why is it important?” The site talks about the 2 elements of lighting, active and passive. Active responsive components include motion activated lights, monitored cameras, alarm systems and motion activated light fixtures. Passive components are static and include fences, barriers, signs and lights on a timer. It is always a smart idea to leave a light on outside at night whether you are at home or not. Remember, criminals like to be concealed, so the main entry points should be covered, such as the front door, back door, lower windows and all pathways to the entry points. Lights can add a decorative appearance to the exterior of the home. One low cost way to improve lighting at night is to utilize solar LED path lights. These types of lights add light at zero electric cost to the home owner and illuminate the pathways to entry points if placed properly. Solar pathway lights are also used in many landscaping applications, not just to decorate the area, but to add light to an otherwise dark area of the yard. LED bulbs are the wide choice amongst home owners, due to the high efficiency and low cost. A 6 watt LED bulb can provide the equivalent of a 60 watt incandescent bulb at a huge savings on the electric bill. Most solar lights are manufactured with LED bulbs. I switched to LED bulbs in all of my lighting applications, and personally leave my front porch and back door lights on all night for safety reasons. The cost is minimal compared to the added safety. For instance, a LED bulb may cost \$9 and last 30,000 hours while an incandescent bulb may cost \$2 but will only last 2500 hours. In order to get the same amount of usage you would have to buy \$36 worth of incandescent bulbs. Then there is a huge savings on your electric bill. Using 45 incandescent bulbs for 10 hours a day will cost the homeowner \$986.18 versus \$118.34 if LED bulbs are used. That is a big savings of \$867.84 as reported by myledlightingguide.com, the true cost of led. Another smart thing to do is have lights set on timers if you are leaving on vacation, and

alternate the on and off time daily. For open areas outside some studies suggest a flood light should be used. Flood lights disperse a wide cone of light and are ideal for illuminating large areas. Lastly, a roadway luminary should be used as a general lighting source to identify your home and light the roadway just outside the home. This type of lighting also allows cameras and neighbors to see and possibly identify any vehicle parked outside the home, or someone walking across the property at night. Proper lighting is a must when home owners want to effectively protect their families from would-be burglars, and studies show that because of lighting the home properly, chances of becoming a victim are reduced. There are different colors and levels of light and it would be up to the homeowner as to which type best suits the particular situation. In any case, in order for any light source to be successful, the proper maintenance must be observed, such as trimming tree branches, bushes and shrubs, replacing damaged electrical components and light fixtures, cleaning dirty lenses and replacing burned-out bulbs. These simple steps will allow for the maximum amount of visibility from security lighting.

Dogs and Signage

Another key point of security to protecting the home is the family dog. My research brought me to a site called Scambusters.org. The article is called 15 Steps You Can Take to Prevent Home Burglary. One of the steps suggest that having a dog is a deterrent. The article goes on to suggest that a small dog is most avoided by burglars, because the small dog is more nervous and tends to be less easy to trick into calming down. The smaller dogs are less trusting and bark louder and longer than bigger ones. Once again, we come across the fact that burglars like to be concealed and the alert of a dog takes this aspect away. Therefore, any dog, small or large, is far more beneficial than none at all. Also, the posting of the fact that there is a dog on the premises is a deterrent within itself. Imagine a burglar walking around the side of a home he

has chosen to break into and seeing a “Beware of Dog” sign. This may be all that is needed to change his mind about breaking into the home. Why bother with the possibility of being discovered due to the bark of a dog, or even attacked, when he could choose a much easier target and not suffer the consequences of being caught or injured.

Mail and Newspaper

Another thing to consider is to always stop the mail if you are going to be away from the home for a significant period of time. It is never smart to allow mail or newspapers to collect in the mailbox or outside the home, because this sends a message to everyone that the home may be unoccupied. The United States Post Office does a background check on all of their employees and it is more of a profession than a paper carrier. You can't be convicted of a felony and be a postal worker, whereas, paper carriers are not regulated. A postal worker is less likely to be a burglar, but a paper carrier may also be a burglar in disguise. So it is sometimes better to have a neighbor get the paper while the home owner is away from the home rather than stopping the paper.

Neighbors and Crime Watches

Nosey neighbors can be a very important part to the safety of the home and the entire neighborhood. It is always a good idea to get to know your neighbors and have their contact information in case of an emergency. The closer you are as a community, the safer you will be. Everyone looking out for the neighborhood will greatly improve the chances that if something does happen, someone will see it. The more eyes on security the better, and an organized Neighborhood Crime Watch is an excellent way to achieve this point. If the homeowner is going out of town and informs the Crime Watch, every neighbor can help watch out for the security of

the home. Crime Watches normally patrol the neighborhood and check areas and homes to make sure everything is safe. In the event something is out of place or something suspicious is seen, a Neighborhood Watch's job is to alert the police and put the information out to the entire neighborhood. Also, posting signage that the neighborhood has a Crime Watch will alert criminals that a Watch exists and may make burglars change their mind about choosing that neighborhood to victimize. Anything that puts a burglar on notice is a positive. Homeowners want burglars to be uneasy and think twice about entering their neighborhood from the very moment they start shopping for a home to burglarize.

Social Media

People are connected to social media and put far too much information on-line about themselves. You should never post information about leaving your home for anyone to see. Burglars can find this information and know that the home is vacant. Also, posting vacation pictures while you are away will also alert criminals that the home is unoccupied and vulnerable. Less information about yourself means more safety in this case. You can post all your vacation pictures after you return home.

Social Acquaintances, Family and Friends

It will significantly increase the security of the home if your family and friends are also included in the security of the home. Remember, the more eyes watching out for security the more likely someone will see something strange or suspicious. I always tell my family if I'm going to be away from my home for a period of time. If your family is not close by you should always tell a friend you trust.

Automobiles and Trash

If the vehicles at the home are not kept in the garage while the homeowner is on vacation, the homeowner should advise the neighbors, family members and local police. The Little Rock Police Department offers a free service called Vacation Home Reports. When the home owner is going to be away for more than 3 days, they can request this service. The service provides 3 property checks per day, one per shift. The home owner provides information on what vehicles will be left at the home, if the mail or paper was suspended, and if anyone is supposed to be checking on the home. When the officer checks the home, they will be physically getting out of the vehicle to check all windows, doors and garages. Vehicles will also be checked to confirm they haven't been broken into. In today's age of technology with advanced key fobs, more and more home owners are leaving the keys to their vehicles in the vehicle, and sometimes the keys to the home are left as well. Keys to the home or vehicle should never be left inside the vehicle. The trash is service that should be kept as normal as possible. The home owner should have a neighbor, friend or family member continue to take the trash out on trash pickup days. Remember, keeping things as normal as possible will lessen the chances of alerting a burglar that the home is unoccupied and vulnerable.

Closing

As I have stated throughout this paper, residential home burglary is a very real threat, and serious thought should be given to preventability. Burglars are always out looking for their next victim. In most cases, home owners can utilize common sense and low cost measures to improve the security of their homes. Something as simple as replacing the standard ¼ inch screw with a 3 inch screw will increase the security of a door. Homeowners should make arming the alarm system a habit every time they leave the home. Changing the dead-bolt to one with a longer

throw, and actually locking the door is better security. Proper maintenance of lawn, landscaping, trees and shrubbery gives the appearance that someone is always paying attention to the property. Switching to LED bulbs, lighting entry points and pathways, and keeping lighting properly maintained provides for better lighting. Better lighting deters burglars and allows for more visibility at night. Also, keeping lights on alternating timers if you are away from the home for vacation or business makes the home appear occupied. Having a dog and signage improves the chances that the burglar will not select that home to burglarize, due to him getting caught or injured. Getting to know your neighbors and joining a neighborhood crime watch adds another layer of security for the entire neighborhood. Stopping the mail and having someone pick up your paper keeps someone from noticing the home may be unoccupied. Having someone take out your trash and notifying the local police department if you are on vacation is another free security measure. Do not advertise the fact that you are going on vacation or post vacation pictures on social media while you are away from the home. Never leave any keys to the home or vehicle in the vehicle. Most of all, when thinking of security for the home, imagine you are a burglar and think about how you would break into your own home. After you figure out a way to defeat your security, figure out a common sense way to improve it immediately, then repeat. The security of your home can be improved by following the previous steps, which have minimal cost versus becoming a victim. Use smart common sense practices in securing your home and the chances of you becoming a victim of a residential home burglary will diminish significantly.

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