

As the darker evenings start to draw in, Burglary and Theft offences can often increase. We would like to remind you of how to protect yourself, your property, and your belongings. Please see the below crime prevention advice key messages

## Burglary

Burglars are opportunistic and observant; they will look for homes with windows or doors left open, or with vulnerable features they can exploit.

Many burglars typically do not want to be seen or heard and if they feel that they would be noticed by a neighbour or passer-by, they are more likely to feel vulnerable and choose somewhere else.

Always consider the onion-peeling principle when it comes to burglary; start on the outside and work inward

Perimeter (boundaries) - outbuildings - building – contents.

Security should be in layers to deter, delay, or detect.

## Boundaries

Lower fences at the front of the property – fencing no more than 1m high is better than high fences as they allow for natural vision over and do not provide cover for someone hiding or trying to force a window or door.

At the rear and sides of a property, taller fencing is recommended to prevent easy access; a minimum height of 1.8m is advised. Check with your local authority planning department for the maximum height.

Ensure access to the sides and rear of any property is restricted with lockable gates situated at the front of any side access path.

Try to make it difficult for anyone climbing over the fence by adding a light trellis, thorny plants, or a suitable anti-climb topping such as plastic spikes. Barbed wire or broken glass is not recommended on walls or fences.

Gravel driveways and paths are ideal for preventing a silent approach.

Most criminals will not target your home if the risk to them of being seen, noticed, and getting caught is too great.

Overgrown bushes and trees make it easier for a burglar to get close to the front of a home unnoticed so keep them pruned back.

## Outbuildings

Sheds and garages are often vulnerable as they are not very secure and contain tools that burglars can use to assist them in gaining entry into a home.

Ensure your shed is securely anchored down – some offenders have simply lifted them up to gain access.

Secure sheds with a hasp and staple, fitted with a closed shackle padlock.

Shed windows can be reinforced with grills. For added security, fit a shed alarm.

Garage doors can be made more secure by installing additional security such as padlocks to provide multiple locking points or using floor-mounted locking T bars.

If an internal door leads directly from your garage to your home, ensure this door is solid and robust and secured with a British Standard 5 lever mortise lock and additional security such as hinge bolts.

If items can be seen from outside, they will be vulnerable so cover them up and tidy away tools.

Use a ground anchor to secure motorcycles, pedal cycles, and other high-value items to stop them from being easily removed. Tools can also be chained to floors and walls to prevent their easy removal.

Consider extending the coverage of any household burglar alarm to your garage, conservatory, or home extension.

Keep bins stored away if possible - they provide a climbing aid for burglars and if left out they can indicate if a home is unoccupied.

Ladders and tools left outside and insecure can often be used to break into or access your home so ensure these are locked to a ground anchor or put away after use.

## Alarms

Fit a burglar alarm - they are a great deterrent. Two industry bodies accredit reputable companies and retailers who install alarms to the British standard; the National Security Inspectorate (NSI) and the Security Systems and Alarms Inspection Board (SSAIB).

A visible audible burglar alarm box should be fitted to both the front and rear of your property, high enough to avoid tampering.

Fitting dummy alarm boxes is not advised - experienced burglars can spot a fake.

## Lighting

Good lighting is essential, it can help identify people and is safer for people coming and going after dark.

Passive Infra-Red lights that switch on automatically when they detect movement are not always the best option - animals and the weather can cause false activations leading to unnecessary alarms and possible neighbour nuisance.

Install a dusk till dawn light, providing a constant low-level white light to illuminate any doorway during darkness. Be careful to ensure the fall of light does not annoy your neighbours.

Use an automatic plug-in time switch to operate an internal lamp or light at pre-set times when you are away.

## Buildings

Contact a member of the Master Locksmiths Association to check whether any entrance door is robust and fit for purpose. They can advise on locks and additional security measures. Any entrance door should be strong and fitted with security hardware to make it part of the wall line.

A timber door should be of solid construction and fitted with a British Standard 5 lever mortise lock and an automatic deadlocking rim latch.

Additional security products are available to strengthen door frames, such as London bars, Birmingham bars, hinge bolts, and rack bolts. Rack bolts - placed at the top and bottom of the door - are more suited to a back door.

A door viewer is a good way to identify unknown visitors, and a door chain can also help.

A letterbox guard fitted to the rear of the door will prevent someone from attempting to open the door mechanism from inside or fishing for items close by. Keep keys and valuables away from door openings.

Consider how you would get out of your home in a fire - keep your keys in a place where you can find them quickly but which is out of reach from any letterbox opening.

Modern multi-locking and PVC doors use a system of hooks and latches. These only work if you remember to lift the handle, lock, and remove the key.

Some modern doors use a euro profile lock - check to see if it protrudes beyond the frame. If it does, consider asking a member of the Master Locksmiths Association to change the lock to a shorter one that is more resistant to being snapped and is security accredited to British standards.

Sliding patio doors are vulnerable to forced entry; check yours to ensure it has an anti-lift device fitted to prevent it from being lifted off its hinges.

Date locks are good for all window types. Sash windows can also be fitted with sash stops to prevent opening the window wide enough to climb through.

Modern windows can have restrictors fitted to allow for ventilation but prevent further opening from outside.

Laminated glazing or security film can help to reinforce glass if attacked.

If you live in a flat, it is essential that the communal front door is properly locked and secured. Contact your landlord or letting agent if you believe the locking mechanism is defective.

Challenge anyone who tries to tailgate you through a communal door.

## Contents

Properly marking any items of value helps police to trace owners of stolen goods; register these items on an accredited property database.

Use police police-approved forensic marking system such as SmartWater - visit <http://www.securedbydesign.com/> for more details.

Take photographs and keep documents such as receipts to prove ownership of your property.

Seek specialist advice regarding antiques. There are etching products for some types of property.

If you have a home safe, it should be in a hidden location - bolted to the floor or wall. Use one that is security-rated - tested to withstand a degree of attack. Safes vary according to the type and value of the item to be stored within, so check with your insurer to ensure you are adequately covered. Alternatively, there are safety deposit box companies that offer secure storage at controlled sites fitted with security-rated vaults. Consider using a vault if you have a large number of valuable items to store.

Avoid keeping valuables on view from outside your home.

## CCTV

CCTV can be a valuable tool and may deter some burglars but it does not stop a crime from occurring.

CCTV cannot replace the requirement for good quality physical security.

Two industry bodies accredit reputable companies that install CCTV to the British standard the National Security Inspectorate (NSI) and the Security Systems and Alarms Inspection Board (SSAIB).

Any footage should be able to capture the head and face of a person so they can be recognised and identified. Cameras should be positioned so that they can obtain such footage but also be out of reach to prevent tampering.

There is extensive legislation on CCTV – especially on the need to respect the privacy of neighbouring properties and the recording of public space - so seek advice from an installer to ensure any system complies with the law. <https://ico.org.uk/for-the-public/cctv-on-your-property/>

Signage is required if practical to show that CCTV is in use.

Dummy CCTV cameras are not advisable – experienced burglars can spot them.

There are also camera systems that have reached a Police Approved Specification providing real-time CCTV coverage on sensor activation to a smartphone, tablet, or laptop. See <http://www.securedbydesign.com/> for more details.

## Final advice

Get into a habit of completing a set procedure when you lock up your home - this ensures you don't forget anything. Simply locking doors and windows can deter opportunistic burglars.

If you are going away, try not to advertise this on social media until your return.

Leave radios and lights in your home on a timer to make the property appear occupied.

Ask a trusted neighbour to keep an eye on your home or join a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme.

Cancel any regular deliveries if you are going away.

The London Fire Brigade conducts home safety visits which can be booked here <http://www.london-fire.gov.uk/HomeFireSafetyVisit.asp>

## Distraction burglary

Distraction burglars pretend to be someone they are not in order to enter your home to steal. Some common methods include

Pretending to be from a utility company investigating a gas or water leak

Asking for help to leave a note for a neighbour.

Claiming to be in a hurry or emergency and needing to get into your home quickly.

Working in teams where one person distracts you while the other searches your home.

Remember - If in doubt, keep them out!

Always check the identity of any caller - use your door viewer to see who is there and keep the door chain on.

Ask for ID and check it with the company before letting somebody in.

Use the phone number advertised in the phone book or online, as the number on their identity card could be fake. For a utility company, call the customer service department. Close the door while you do this.

Remember, genuine callers won't mind checks. If you feel at all unsure, schedule a time for the caller to come back when a friend or relative is there.

For pre-planned appointments with utility companies, a password scheme can be set up.

If a distraction burglar has entered your home, be careful not to touch anything as there may be forensic evidence to trace the suspect. Call the police immediately.

## General advice for motor vehicles

Fit theft-resistant number plate fittings – stolen number plates are commonly used to hide the identity of stolen vehicles. Use one-way clutch head screws and adhesive to secure the plate.

When out and about - try to park your vehicle in a park Mark-approved car park which has an approved security standard, or if not, park in an area that is overlooked and well-lit

Thieves are using sophisticated methods to steal vehicles with electronic keys - a scanner is used to locate the signal from the key. To prevent this, always keep the electronic key in a security pouch when not in use.

Fitting locking wheel nuts will reduce the likelihood of wheels and tyres being stolen.

## Cars and vans

Leaving items on show is an invitation – power leads, Satnav's and mounts, stereo front panels, coins, sunglasses, tools, clothing, and bags should be removed from the vehicle or placed out of sight.

Keys and ignition fobs should be kept safe and out of sight and reach – the most common ways to steal a car or van is to take the keys or ignition fob, either when left in the vehicle or from your home through burglary. Try not to keep your keys in an obvious place such as the hallway or kitchen.

Always lock and close the windows of your vehicle when unattended – on the drive, the petrol station forecourt, or when parking an unlocked vehicle is the easiest to steal or steal from.

Fit an alarm or immobiliser if your vehicle does not have one.

Set the steering wheel lock if your vehicle is fitted with one. If not, use a bar-type steering lock each time you leave your vehicle.

Also consider using a gear stick lock.

Some criminal gangs are looking out for certain vehicles where the wing mirrors automatically fold in when locked – if they notice such a vehicle with the wing mirrors still open, they will know it is unlocked and will then steal it. Make sure you lock your vehicle properly at all times.

## Motorcycles and mopeds

Keep your motorcycle or moped in a garage, shed, or designated bike store at home – storing it out of view is one of the best ways to prevent opportunist theft. Consider fitting a garage or shed alarm.

Fit an alarm, or immobiliser, preferably with tracking capability, and property mark any panels – alarms act as a deterrent. Tracking devices and property marking assist in recovery should your motorcycle or moped be stolen.

Lock the rear wheel to an immovable object or ground anchor and use a disk lock on the front wheel – making the vehicle less of an easy option will reduce the chances of it being targeted. Combine the use of a disk lock on the front wheel and a chain lock to a ground anchor.

Don't rely on the steering lock – standard steering locks are easily defeated, and your bike can always be lifted into a van if not secured.

Use a bike cover – covers are another hassle for an opportunist thief, if they cannot see what moped or motorcycle it is they are less likely to target it.

## Plant machinery

Remove keys, fit locking mechanisms, or anchor to immovable objects – even when unattended for a short time keys should be removed. When left overnight machinery should be secured in a compound if possible and anti-theft devices fitted, chained to immovable objects or together.

Fit immobilisation and tracking systems – the use of tracking systems can notify the owner the machinery is being interfered with or moved, allowing for a prompt response to either prevent the theft or detain offenders. Anti-theft devices make your plant less attractive to the thief.

Maintain accurate records of equipment owned or hired, including serial numbers and registration numbers – accurate and detailed records allow for the identification of stolen plant machinery. Without this, your mini digger could be any mini digger.

## Caravans and trailers

Fit physical security and a caravan cover - fit a combination of hitch lock anti-theft device, wheel clamp, and ground anchor, a physical barrier to theft is always a clear deterrent. Using a caravan cover and installing an alarm makes any theft more difficult and your caravan less attractive to thieves.

Register, record, and property mark all parts of the caravan or trailer – register your caravan or trailer with the Central Registration & Identification Scheme (CRIS) and use overt and covert chips to mark it. If stolen, it may have its number plates, chassis, frame or CRIS numbers removed. Take photos, including specific fittings, marks or damage as these can help to identify your caravan or trailer.

Install an alarm and tracking system, including roof marking – if stolen, being able to track and identify your caravan or trailer is vital. Add clear roof markings, giving the year of manufacture and Crime Report number, to assist police in identifying your caravan.

## Goods vehicles and lorries

Lock it, remove it, alarm it – when leaving your vehicle unattended, first remove valuable items and cash from view, lock it and take the keys with you or leave them in a secure drawer or office at work. Overnight, remove tools from vans or if parking up with an empty trailer, leave the doors open. Always set the vehicle alarm and keep fuel tanks locked.

Plan journeys, have an itinerary, no hitchhikers – have a route planned, including layovers, so someone else knows where you are due to be. Where possible use safe lorry parks or park visible to passing traffic. Avoid insecure locations like remote laybys and quiet industrial estates. Do not pick up strangers as you have no idea what their intentions are.

Lock your vehicle and check it – even when on the move, making deliveries, or refueling, keep your vehicle locked and the keys with you. Before you start again, visually inspect your vehicle, has anything changed, and if so why?

## Catalytic converters

The precious metal in catalytic converters has led to an increase in their theft.

To protect your converter from theft, ask your vehicle dealership if they can give you any advice on locks or guards that are approved by the vehicle manufacturer.

Alternatively, try to make sure your vehicle is parked in a garage overnight, or if you have a commercial vehicle park it in a secure compound. If this isn't possible, park in an area that is well-lit and overlooked and try to park so that the converter can't be easily reached by potential thieves. Vehicles that sit high above the road are particularly vulnerable.

You should also register your converter and mark it with a forensic marker, which will make it harder for thieves to dispose of.

If you are the victim of anti-social behaviour, you should report this immediately

Reporting incidents as they are happening by calling 999 to report a crime that is taking place or about to take place. The police number for non-emergencies is 101 (24 hours) or [www.met.police.uk/report](http://www.met.police.uk/report).

Reporting ASB/incidents after they have happened, please send an email to [ASB.StatNuisance@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:ASB.StatNuisance@lewisham.gov.uk)

If you need to speak to us further for any advice, please do not hesitate to contact the Antisocial Behaviour & Statutory Nuisance Team. Email address is [ASB.StatNuisance@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:ASB.StatNuisance@lewisham.gov.uk)