

Crime Prevention at Home

Safety in our city

Ottawa is regarded by many as one of the safest cities in the world, but that's no reason to let your guard down. While the Ottawa Police Service will always be available to respond to crime, we need your active participation to help prevent crime.

When it comes to their homes, Ottawa residents have told us that they're concerned with break and enter and various property crimes like vandalism. The following information provides a good start for addressing these issues and raising awareness about crime prevention in general. We can't do it alone - get informed, get involved and make crime prevention part of your everyday life.

Start with the basics

- Take advantage of the Ottawa Police's Home Security Inspection Program where, at your request, police representatives will visit your home (house, condo, apartment, etc.) to provide a free safety audit - assessing ways to make your home safer.
- Start and maintain an accurate household inventory, and use Operation Identification - a free engraving program offered by the Ottawa Police - to mark your property.
- Get involved in Neighbourhood Watch - it's one of the best ways to meet your neighbours and make your home and community safer.
- Contact the Ottawa Police about Child Print - a program for parents or guardians who want to learn about and practice safety tips aimed at protecting their child or children.

Securing your home

- When moving into a new home, be sure to have locks re-keyed or replaced. Keep duplicate keys to a minimum.
- Security alarm systems should be used in addition to, not in place of, other security measures.
- House numbers should be in a well-lit area and easily visible to neighbours and emergency response units.
- Exterior doors should be solid core. Hinges should be on the inside. Seal gaps between the door and frame in order to prevent a jimmy bar from being used.
- Install deadbolt locks on all exterior doors and other entrances into the house from the garage or basement.
- Install wide-angle viewers for exterior doors.
- While proper locks on sliding glass doors are recommended, inserting a fitted piece of wood or metal in the door's lower track improves security.
- Secure basement and ground level windows, as well as other possible points of entry, such as pet doors and window-mounted air conditioners.

- Check references of people you employ to work in and around your home.
- List only surname and initials in the telephone book.
- Have adequate insurance coverage on your home and contents.

Interior Security

- Leave doors and windows locked whenever possible.
- Use curtains on basement and garage windows to prevent others from shopping for goods.
- Store credit cards, identification and other valuables in a safe place, and use a safety deposit box for seldom used valuables (e.g., jewellery).
- Avoid leaving house and car keys available to a thief or intruder.
- Do not leave purses or valuables in view of persons at your door.
- Insist on seeing identification from sales and service people.
- Consider purchasing a home security system.

Exterior Security

- Keep tools, ladders and garbage pails locked away.
- Keep bicycles, barbecues and lawn equipment securely stored.
- Have adequate exterior lighting.
- Trim trees and shrubs that could easily hide intruders.
- Don't leave notes on your door.
- Don't leave spare keys hidden outside - they can be found.
- Don't use a nameplate outside of your house with your full name. A criminal can use this information to look up your number in the phone book and call to see if you are home.

Vacation security tips

- Inform trusted neighbours or relatives of your vacation plans and where you can be reached. Leave a key with them so they can check your house.
- Have a neighbour park a car in your driveway, and pick up your mail, newspapers and flyers.
- Ask a neighbour to put one of their garbage bags in front of your house on collection day.
- Don't order merchandise for delivery while you are away, and cancel regular deliveries.
- Don't talk about your vacation plans with strangers or service people.
- Use your work address on your luggage tags so a potential criminals won't know where your empty house is.
- Secure or remove valuables and firearms from your home.
- Leave your house with a lived-in look. Use automatic timers to turn on lights and radios.
- Have your lawn cut or snow removed while you are away.

- If you come home and see a door ajar or a window broken, call the police immediately. NEVER enter the dwelling. If it looks suspicious - don't hesitate - call police.

Tips on dealing with Door to Door Solicitor :

- At no time should you let any of these people in your house! Not even to use the phone.
- If you are unsure if a solicitor is legitimate, ask for identification verifying that they are employed by the company or charity they claim to work for. If they don't have any I.D., don't give them any money and tell them to leave.
- Be wary of any solicitor that insists that the deal being offered is only valid at that moment or uses high pressure tactics to make a sale.
- Legitimate businesses and charities will be happy to provide you with written brochures or web addresses to visit to "check them out".
- If solicitor refuses to leave after being asked to, or becomes irate, shut the door. If they still don't leave, call 911.
- If you don't feel comfortable giving the solicitor any money DON'T! Do not let anyone "guilt" you into giving them money or buying their product.
- If you've already purchased something from a solicitor, and have paid by check and no longer feel comfortable with the transaction, cancel the check as soon as possible.
- Do not hire anyone who comes to your door offering to clean your house, do home improvements, etc. with out first checking them out with the Better Business Bureau and talking to references and definitely do not give them any money before they do any work!

Remember, door-to-door solicitation and voluntarily giving them money is not against the law. Not providing services paid for and not leaving private property when asked to is. Please share information with your neighbours when a suspicious person is in your neighbourhood and DON'T give anyone money when you don't feel it's a legitimate cause!

Personal Robberies and Swarmings

The Ottawa Police Robbery Unit recommends the following safety tips concerning personal robberies and swarmings:

- Be alert to your surroundings and avoid isolated areas, in particular after dark and when withdrawing money from ATMs;
- Travel with multiple friends whenever possible;
- Be wary of inadvertently displaying possessions such as cell phones and personal music devices; and,
- Let someone know where you are going and when you can be expected home.

Should you become a victim of a swarming or personal robbery, the following steps are recommended:

- Do not resist your attackers, they may be armed and this could lead to serious injury or death;
- Try and memorize their faces, clothing and licence plates if they leave in vehicles;
- Call 911 as soon as possible, or if you are around an OC Transpo facility look for an emergency call box; and,
- If you are a student and are robbed at school or by someone from your school, report the event to the office and to the Ottawa Police Service.