



SAFETY TIPS FOR WOMEN HOME SAFETY

During the next few months, the Sun Lakes Sheriff's Posse will offer safety tips for women. This month the safety features are centered on ideas for securing your home. While the strategies listed here are not all-inclusive, they do highlight proven methods by which you can reduce your chances of becoming a victim of crime. You are encouraged to employ these ideas to maximize your own personal safety and to lessen our community's attractiveness to the criminal element.

We should note that none of the safety items provided below are intended to make you feel like a "prisoner" in your own home. They are merely common sense approaches to help ensure that you, and your possessions, are less attractive to criminals because access to your home's interior is less easily obtained.

A) Have strong locks professionally installed on all exterior doors. Make sure you use those locks **every time** you leave your home.

B) Have a whole-house alarm system professionally installed. Post the company's stickers on your windows and sliding glass doors. Install the security company's metal sign in a prominent, well-lighted location in your front yard.

C) **Never** leave duplicate keys to your home in an outside location on your property or even in your garage. Ask a trusted friend and/or neighbor to keep a spare set of your house keys in their home. Or, consider using a safe deposit box at your local bank.

D) Install a security door and keep it locked at all times. Having a locked security door allows you to open the main interior door without becoming immediately vulnerable to someone standing on the other side of your door.

E) Install a "Charlie Bar" or a thick, wooden bar in the inside runner of your sliding glass door. When installed, either item prevents an intruder from opening the slider. It's a great way to secure what can be an easy entry point into your home.

F) **Never** open your door(s) immediately simply because someone knocks or rings your doorbell. Always make sure you know exactly who is there. Do NOT hesitate to tell unknown, or unwelcome, visitors to “go away.” If they do not leave, call 911 immediately. You are NOT being rude by insuring your personal safety!

G) If you are expecting a repairman or contractor of any kind, always ask them to display their identification to you through the door’s window or “peep hole” before allowing them entry into your home. If you are still unsure, call the company and ask for the name of the individual assigned to do the work in your home. Again, don’t feel that asking someone to wait is “rude.” Reputable companies understand your safety concerns and a verifying phone call takes only a few moments to complete.

H) Close and lock your windows at night. Also, draw the draperies and blinds or close the shutters. These actions prevent a prowler from watching to see if you are alone and from seeing the possessions within your home. And, even if your backyard is walled, don’t let a false sense of security coax you into leaving your windows open at night. Your walls can be scaled easily by the use of a simple step stool or small ladder. Criminals are prepared – you should be too!

I) **ALWAYS KEEP YOUR GARAGE DOORS CLOSED!** This suggestion has a couple of interconnecting thoughts that you should consider.

First, at any time of day, it’s obvious that an open garage door allows an intruder easy access to the inside of your garage and to the contents stored there. It truly takes only a few seconds for someone to grab any items they desire and to toss them into a waiting vehicle. Even if your neighbors see this happen, chances are they would not be able to get enough identifying information to aid in an apprehension. So, as you can see from this scenario, an open garage door may result in the loss of your property.

Secondly, an open garage door leaves only one barrier between you and an intruder - the interior door leading from the garage into your home. If that interior door is unlocked, an intruder has been granted virtually free access inside your home and to YOU! Or, even if the interior door is locked, chances are that a strong intruder could easily kick it in and gain access into your home. So, as you can see, whether the interior door between your garage and home is locked or unlocked, it offers very little resistance once an intruder has initial access to your garage’s interior. In this scenario,

the end result may not be limited to the loss of your valuable items. It may result in your personal injury or, even worse, in the loss of your life!

So, the very best way to preclude access to your garage and, potentially, to your home's interior, is to simply **KEEP YOUR GARAGE DOORS CLOSED AT ALL TIMES.**

Another thought to consider. If you have an automatic garage door opener that allows you to disrupt the system's signal, use that disruption option before going to sleep each evening. This will prevent any random signals from accidentally (or intentionally) opening your garage door. And, even with that option employed, lock the interior door from the garage into your home as well.

J) Have a **fully charged cell phone** on your nightstand at night. Use it to **call 911** if your main phone service becomes disrupted.

K) Keep your vehicle's key fob on the nightstand next to you when you go to bed. If you hear any unusual noises during the night, press the "alarm" button on the key fob to activate your vehicle's horn. This might be enough to scare a burglar away. **Call 911 immediately.**

L) If you are going away for any length of time, please ask a friend and/or trusted neighbor to watch for any newspapers or other items that may be deposited on your property. Ask them to collect your mail, use the drop down feature in your curbside mailbox or place a "hold" on your mail deliveries at the post office. Cancel all scheduled newspaper deliveries. One sure sign that a property is empty is an accumulation of newspapers on the driveway or sidewalk!

Again, the above tips are offered as a sampling of the ways in which you can take active control of your home's security and your personal safety while inside it.

If you have any questions about these suggestions, or a safety concern that you would like to discuss with a Posseman, please feel free to call the Sun Lakes Sheriff's Posse's Office between the hours of 9:00a.m. and 4:00p.m., Monday through Friday, at **480-895-8751.**

Future Safety Topics: Be sure to return to this portion of our website in the near future for some practical safety tips for women who are outside at night. Also, in future editions, we will offer some suggestions about safety issues to consider when you are driving.