



Preventing Burglary and Vandalism

When taking crime reports people often ask "Why did my house get hit and not my neighbors?" Clearly some of it can be chalked up to chance, but often times a well lit home with easy views to the street will be passed over when a dark home with bushes hiding the front might be selected. Here are a few tips on making your home and neighborhood a harder target for vandals and thieves:

- **Know Your Neighbors.** The most important prevention tip is getting to know your neighbors. You can do this informally or through a local "Crime Watch" program organized by neighbors with assistance from the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department. Being familiar with your neighbors helps you to know who should be around their home and who should not, and makes it easier for you to contact them and ask if someone should be there or not.
- **Good Lighting.** Provide adequate lighting for your home. Studies consistently show that good lighting discourages crime. While you don't need searchlights shining in your neighbor's bedroom window, adequate tasteful lighting discourages criminals who like to operate in the dark. Motion-activated lights provide the added benefit of reducing power consumption and add to the startle factor for those that activate them. Just be certain they are properly adjusted.
- **Keep Landscaping Trimmed.** Keep landscaping trimmed so that no hiding or obscured areas are created. Bushes and trees can enhance your home's curb appeal, but they can also create a haven for criminals dodging passing vehicles or police. Well-trimmed landscaping that is designed to work with your lighting will make your home less attractive to offenders.
- **Keep Valuable Locked Away.** What property are you leaving outside and available to vandals and thieves? Are you leaving anything outside your home that is vulnerable? Your car or golf cart? Bicycles or other valuable items? Do you need to clean out the garage so that the car can be regularly stored in there? Remember anything left outside needs to have extra steps taken to secure it.
- **Take A Look At Your Home.** Do your own home security survey — take a step back and look at your home from the point of view of a potential criminal. What is the easiest way to approach it undetected? How would you gain entry if you were a criminal? Which windows or doors are the easiest to break into? Are there any hidden areas where an offender could lurk undetected? Once you have taken a critical look at your property take steps to counter the shortcomings you have found. Can you change lighting or landscaping? Do you need to improve locks? If you have doors or windows that aren't easily secured should you consider a home security system? If you have hidden areas that you or neighbors can't see into should you consider a basic camera system?
- **Report Suspicious Activity.** Finally, if you see something or someone suspicious have them checked out. If they are at a neighbors home call that neighbor and see if they belong there. Most neighbors will welcome your concern. If that is not practical, then call the police. Be prepared to give the dispatcher a good description of the person or situation and why you think it is suspicious. Police officers would rather check out a suspicious situation that turns out to be nothing, than to miss an opportunity to stop a major or mass crime event before it gets started.