

Home Invasion Robberies

One of the most frightening of crimes has to be the home invasion robbery. A "home invasion" is when criminals force their way into a home, forcing the occupants to comply with their demands. This type of crime is particularly heinous because it violates the victims' privacy and can sometimes be very violent. Statistics on home invasions are difficult to find as the FBI and other law enforcement agencies classify them as a home burglary or robbery.

Home invasions are rarely random; the victims are usually targeted because they appear affluent or there is an assumption that they have quantities of cash in the home, such as from a retail business. Many robbers will follow their victims home from shopping or because they are driving an expensive car. Although some of these crimes involve a forced entry into the home, many begin with the robbers simply knocking on the front door, with the knowledge that most people will open the door without asking who is there. Sometimes they will use a ruse to try to get the door open, such as a false delivery, or faking an automobile accident.

Once inside, home invaders will take their time with the expectation that their entry has gone unnoticed. They force the home's occupants to provide access to valuables by opening safes, stealing credit cards, and trying to extract bank account information and pin codes. They can try to increase their escape time by disabling phone lines and binding the occupants. While home invasions are becoming more frequent, there are steps you can take to try to prevent one from occurring.

The first step, as with most crime prevention, is to be aware of your surroundings. When you drive home, wait before you exit your car to see if anyone is lurking nearby. If you park in your garage, close the overhead door before you exit your vehicle, and watch the door as it closes to make sure that no one tries to sneak in. If you think that you are being followed as you drive home, drive past your house without stopping and continue on to the nearest police station, or some other areas where there are people around.

Make sure that your front door has a solid wood core and has a reinforced dead-bolt. Don't open the door to a stranger if you are not expecting them; use a peephole or an intercom to identify the caller. Good home security practices are also a deterrent; keep your home well lit and visible from the street, get to know your neighbors so they can spot unusual activity, keep your doors and windows closed or secure at all times.

Don't be afraid to use your alarm system when you are home, as most systems have the ability to be armed in a "stay" mode that will only arm the perimeter doors and windows. Make sure you are familiar with your system's panic features. Home alarms all have built-in panic buttons that can be activated 24/7, even if the system isn't armed, and most have some type of "duress" code which will appear to disarm the alarm normally but will send a silent signal to the monitoring center that there is a serious problem.

If all else fails and you find yourself a victim, it is imperative that you cooperate with the invaders. Don't try to be a hero to protect your property – things can be replaced, but your life cannot.

Notes From Jane & Lloyd

It seems like there are a lot of companies jumping on the "security bandwagon" lately; giant national and international mega-corporations, telecom giants, even cable television providers. Their buzz word is "bundling" of services.; their reasoning is that you can get all of your groceries at a supermarket, why not get all of your home service from one provider? This isn't the first time we've seen this, over the last 30-plus years we have been in this business, many companies have tried this and failed miserably. Security isn't the same as TV, our customers expect a quick response to questions and emergencies, without having to navigate through a sea of voice prompts or to "hold for the next available operator". Security is a specialty that can't be compared to other home services. Rather than the 'supermarket' analogy, we prefer to use a comparison to the medical profession - you wouldn't go to a podiatrist for brain surgery, would you? While time will tell how successful these new ventures will be, we will continue to do what we do best; offer quality and professional security systems that are custom designed to fit your life. As always, all of us at Metrowest Security hope you have a happy holiday season and a healthy and prosperous New Year!

Best regards,

Jane & Lloyd Silverstein

Metrowest Security Systems

Alarm Permits & Renewals

Many cities in Southern California require permits for alarm systems. These can usually be obtained from the local police department, or through the city clerk's office. Besides complying with the law, there are some other advantages to having a permit. Most cities now impose fines for false alarms, but usually systems with permits are allowed one or more per year at no charge, or else the fine structure is much less than unpermitted systems. Permits usually require an initial fee with renewals on an annual basis. We try to stay on top of changes in local permit requirements, but these laws can sometimes change without our knowledge. Below is a list of some of the local municipalities that require permits, and where to go for more information:

Burbank (818) 238-3226

<http://www.ci.burbank.ca.us/index.aspx?page=381>

Culver City (310) 253-6257

<http://www.culvercity.org/Government/PublicSafety/Police.aspx>

Glendale (818) 548-4044

<http://www.police.ci.glendale.ca.us>

Los Angeles (213) 473-5901

<http://www.lacity.org/finance>

Pasadena (626) 744-4166

http://cityofpasadena.net/Finance/Alarm_Permits