

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING HOME SECURITY

Home security is a universal concern. Almost daily there is news of a break and enter, and too often, a homeowner assaulted in the process. To reduce the risk of becoming a statistic, the Victoria Police Department provides homeowners with household and personal security assessments.

The program, which has been in operation for 17 years, has Reserve Constables audit the home to identify where potential security weaknesses exist and provide guidelines to reduce the risks. Dependent on the size of the home, audits can take from 30 minutes up to two hours. While there is no cost for this service, it may be necessary to purchase items to maximize home security.

“Generally, newer residences tend to require less security upgrading,” says Reserve Sgt. Barry Van Schaik of the Victoria Police Department. “Older residences typically were not designed with crime prevention in mind.”

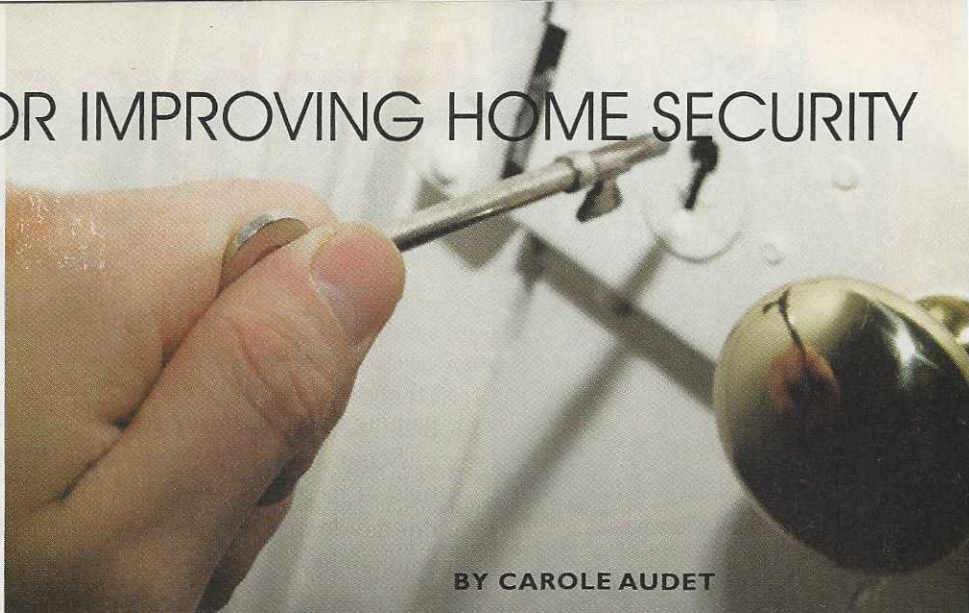
Complacency and lack of awareness and education top the list of reasons why homeowners leave themselves exposed to potential security risks. They usually only become security conscious after they have been victimized, says Van Schaik.

Of primary concern are lighting, locks, doors and windows. However, issues such as lack of visibility from the street or neighbours, due to concealing bushes and trees, also need to be addressed.

Here are a few suggestions:

- Solid doors, either wood or aluminum.
- Strong dead bolts with at least a one-inch throw.
- Door frames should be equipped with three-inch screws. This would necessitate several kicks before the door gives.
- Security film for single-pane windows, particularly windows less than 20-feet high and larger than one-square foot in size. Single-pane glass is easy to break – the security film will provide some barrier.
- Chain or lock up ladders – don’t give thieves easy access to the home.
- Trim hedges to provide neighbours with more visibility for spotting an intruder.
- Install motion-sensor lighting.
- Join the local Block Watch program and remember to report suspicious activity to the police.

“Home security is like an onion, the more layers of protection you provide the safer you are, says Van Schaik. “Garage doors should be locked, the door leading to the garage



BY CAROLE AUDET

should also be locked. Always lock your patio doors and windows. Don’t leave windows open on a hot day if you aren’t watching them. If you are in your backyard, don’t leave your front door unlocked.”

If you live in Victoria or Esquimalt, please call 995-7399 mailbox 6401 to arrange an appointment for a home audit. For the Block Watch program, visit www.victoriaesquimaltblockwatch.com or call 995-7409.

For homeowners living outside the Victoria/Esquimalt area, contact the local police department for information on similar programs in the community. **SL**

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