



Prairie City Police Department

Michael E. German, Chief of Police



*203 East Jefferson Street
Prairie City, Iowa 50228
Phone: (515)994-2649
Fax: (515)994-2850*

Dear Prairie City Residents,

Have you ever been locked out of your home? Were you able to get in anyway? If you can break into your own home, it's just as easy for someone else to break in, too. Many intruders will spend no more than 60 seconds trying to break into a home. As spring approaches, the opportunity for burglars and burglaries increases. Therefore, it is important to take preventative measures now. Strong locks, outdoor lighting and good neighbors who look out for one another can be effective deterrents to burglars. As always, any information that you have about a burglary or burglars should always be reported to the Prairie City Police Department. Officers are available by contacting the non-emergency dispatch line at 1-800-362-1851. It DOES NOT have to be an emergency to speak with an officer on this line. Any information you have is greatly appreciated. Here are a few tips that can help you keep you and your property safe and secure.

Check Your Locks

- Make sure every external door has a strong, well-installed dead bolt lock. Key-in-the-knob locks alone are not enough.
- Sliding glass doors offer easy access if they are not properly secured. You can secure them by putting a broomstick or dowel in the inside track to jam the door or by installing commercially available locks. To prevent the door being lifted off of the track, drill a hole through the sliding door frame and the fixed frame. Then insert a pin in the hole.
- Lock double-hung windows with key locks or "pin" your windows by drilling a small hole at a 45 degree angle between the inner and outer frames, then insert a nail that can be removed. You should secure basement windows with grilles or grates (but make sure that they can be opened from the inside in case of fire).
- Never hide keys around the outside of your home. Instead, give an extra key to a neighbor you trust.
- When you move into a new house or apartment, re-key the locks.

Check Your Doors

While we all like to feel that once we close and lock our doors, we're safe and secure, the truth of the matter is that a lock on a flimsy door is about as effective as locking your car door but leaving the window down with your wallet on the front seat.

- All outside doors should be metal or solid wood.
- Install a peephole or wide-angle viewer in all entry doors so that you can see who is outside without opening the door. Door chains break easily and don't keep out intruders.
- If your doors don't fit tightly in their frames, install weather stripping around them.

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Check the Outside

Take a look at your home from the outside, and keep in mind the following tips to help make your home as safe as it can be.

- Burglars hate bright lights. Install outside lights and keep them on at night. Motion-detector lights can be particularly effective.
- Keep your yard clean. Prune shrubbery so it doesn't hide windows or doors. Cut back tree limbs that a burglar could use to climb to an upper-level window.
- If you travel, create the illusion that you are at home by getting timers that will turn lights (and perhaps a television or radio) on and off in different parts of your home throughout the day and evening hours. Lights burning 24 hours a day signal an empty house.
- Leave shades, blinds, and curtains in normal positions. Make sure you don't let your mail and/or newspapers pile up. Call the post office and newspaper to stop delivery or have a neighbor pick them up.
- Make a list of your valuables, such as VCRs, stereos, computers, and jewelry. Take pictures of the items, list their serial numbers and description. This will help police if your home is burglarized.
- Consult the Prairie City Police Department or the city website for a FREE residential security survey.

Burglars Can Do More than Just Steal

While most burglars prefer to strike when no one is home, intruders can commit other crimes such as rape, robbery, and assault if they are surprised by someone entering the home, or if they pick a home that is occupied.

- If something looks questionable – a slit screen, a broken window or an open door – don't go in. Call the police from a neighbor's house, a cell phone, or a public phone.
- At night, if you think you hear someone breaking in, leave safely if you can, then call the police. If you can't leave, lock yourself in a room with a phone and call the police. If an intruder is in your room, pretend you are asleep.
- Never leave a message on your answering machine that indicates that you may not be at home, or that you live alone. Instead, say "We're not available right now."

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What If I Live in an Apartment?

While apartment living is a little different from living in a single family home, there are still some additional things that you can do to make sure that you, your loved ones, and your property remain safe and secure. Similar to Neighborhood Watch, members of an Apartment Watch learn how to make their homes more secure, watch out for one another and members of the community, and report crime and suspicious activity to the police. Some things you can do:

- Never let anyone you don't know into your building or past security doors.
- Have a reception in the lobby of your building or a cookout on common property so neighbors can get to know one another.
- Start a Safe Haven Program for children – places where they can go in emergency or scary situations.
- Check the complex on a regular basis for problems such as burned-out light bulbs, dark corridors, uncollected trash, or broken locks on mailboxes and doors. Report any such problems to the building manager. Keep pressure on management to make sure it provides adequate security.
- Organize meetings to brainstorm how you can help each other, such as starting an escort service for the elderly