



— CRIME REDUCTION TIPS

- FRAUD TIPS -

Become less of a target:

- Make sure you understand how an online auction works before you bid on merchandise.
- Investigate the seller as much as possible. Be wary if the seller has only a post office box address or an email address.
- Bid at auction houses only if there's insurance to protect the buyer or an escrow account where your money will be held until you receive your merchandise.
- Always use a credit card for your auction purchase so that you can dispute the charge if necessary; never use a wire transfer, money order, or personal check.
- To protect yourself against exorbitant charges, make sure you know the shipping and handling charges up front.
- To foil identity thieves, never give out your Social Security number or other personal information.
- Shred all bills, bank statements, and "pre-approved" credit card offers before you put them in the trash.
- Don't have new checks mailed to you at home; pick them up at the bank.
- When someone asks you for a contribution to a charity, call the charity & make sure it is soliciting in your neighborhood.

- Make your check out to the name of the charitable organization, never to the person who is doing the soliciting, and mail it directly to the charity.

- BURGLARY OF VEHICLE TIPS -

Don't be a statistic:

Keep lists of your property including brand name, serial numbers, and model numbers of items you routinely carry in your vehicle so if you forget to take something out you will have the information to assist with recovery. Park in a well lit area close to the building.

While parking in an isolated spot may reduce door dings, a criminal looks for cars parked out of the way in order to help ensure less attention is drawn to them. The way you can help goes along with a program the Lancaster Police Department has joined in with other police departments around the state trying to reduce car burglaries.

The program is real simple, HIDE/LOCK/TAKE; Hide your belongings, Lock your vehicle and Take your keys. If you follow these steps you will reduce the risk of being a victim of car burglary. The HIDE/LOCK/TAKE program targets areas that have a number of parking spaces, for example shopping centers, apartment complexes, large businesses, and hotels.

- NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH -

Citizens are a big part of reducing the crime rate in Lancaster; it takes citizens stepping up and getting involved in programs. There are a number of programs to get involved into try and make a difference.

Neighborhood Crime Watch being just one. Neighborhood Watch is one of the oldest and most effective crime prevention programs in the country, bringing citizens together with law enforcement to deter crime and make communities safer. Neighborhood Watch can trace its roots back to the days of colonial settlements, when night watchmen patrolled the streets. The modern version of Neighborhood Watch was developed in response to requests from sheriffs and police chiefs who were looking for a crime prevention program that would involve citizens and address an increasing number of burglaries. Launched in 1972, Neighborhood Watch counts on citizens to organize themselves and work with law enforcement to keep a trained eye and ear on their communities, while demonstrating their presence at all times of day and night. The program took off quickly, in just ten years, data showed that 12 percent of the population was involved in a Neighborhood Watch. Neighborhood Watch works because it reduces opportunities for crime to occur; it doesn't rely on altering or changing the criminal's behavior or motivation.

- TIPS -

- Physical conditions like abandoned cars or overgrown vacant lots contribute to crime. Sponsor cleanups, encourage residents to beautify the area, and ask them to turn on outdoor lights at night.
- Work with small businesses to repair rundown storefronts, clean up littered streets, and create jobs for young people.
- Start a block parent program to help children cope with emergencies while walking to and from school or playing in the area.

- Emphasize that Watch groups are not vigilantes and should not assume the role of the police. Their duty is to ask neighbors to be alert, observant, and caring—and to report suspicious activity or crimes immediately to the police.
- If you want to make a stand and help the Lancaster Police Department lower the crime in your neighborhood, contact Officer Paul Beck; pbeck@lancaster-tx.com at (972) 218-2755.
- If you or your neighborhood has been involved in the past and things have kind of died off, contact us and we can help you set up a block meeting to get everyone involved again. Let's do our part to keep crime out of Lancaster.

- HOME SECURITY -

This checklist was designed to assist you in making a security survey of your own home. The purpose of the survey is to identify security weaknesses of your home and daily routines around your home. These are things that make your home look inviting to the criminal. It should begin at the curb and end with the interior of the home. It should include house numbers, landscaping, doors, locks, strike plates, windows, indoor-outdoor lighting and its use, the garage and driveways.

FROM THE CURB:

Are your house numbers visible from the street for emergency service such as police, fire, and ambulance?

Does the overall appearance of your home give criminals information about you and your family that would assist them in victimizing you--things such as a full mailbox, outdoor lighting on during the day, or the garage doors open with no cars present? Are all fence gates padlocked to make it more difficult for strangers to enter your yard?



- HOME SECURITY -

LANDSCAPING :

- Are your shrubs and trees trimmed to "open up the line of sight" of your home for your neighbors from several directions?
- Are shrubs and trees trimmed to prohibit concealment of an intruder?

OUTDOOR LIGHTING :

- Do you have only decorative lighting such as used in flower beds?
- Do you have only entrance/exit lighting such as front/rear door type lights?
- Do you have true security lighting operated by an electric eye or timer, every night, all night, giving your home a perimeter of light around it?

EXTERNAL DOORS :

- Are all external doors either metal, solid wood, solid wood frame, or at least solid core construction?
- Are door frames strong and tight enough to withstand some degree of force?
- Are doors with outside exposed hinges pinned to prevent easy removal from outside?
- Are all external doors equipped with "good" dead bolt locks which have at least a one-inch throw?
- Are the strike plates installed with three-to-four inch screws which are anchored well into the two by-four inch stud behind the door frame?
- Are glass sliding doors pinned to prevent being forced open? Is the upper track secured with large pan head screws to prevent lifting?
- Are French or double doors fitted with flush bolts at the top and bottom edge of the inactive or secondary door?
- Is there a door leading from the garage to the interior of the home, and if so, is it equally secure as an external door?



WINDOWS :

- Are wooden windows "pinned" on both sides, from the inside?
- Are aluminum windows fitted with secondary locking devices, easily removed, in case of fire?
- Is shrubbery trimmed away from the outside of the windows to prohibit concealment of an intruder?

GARAGE DOORS :

- Are overhead garage doors fitted with an interior locking device, blocking the track, as well as an outside locking device?
- Do windows in the garage door prohibit viewing the interior of the garage from the outside by use of curtains or window film?
- Is the garage door kept down and locked at all times?

Alarms offer additional security, but should never be substituted for good locks. When considering an alarm, you should have several companies appraise your needs. Insist on a written proposal and a copy of the contract you will need to sign. Before signing, check the company's reputation through the Better Business Bureau. Employees of the police department are prohibited from making any recommendations for any specific alarm company.