

LOCK IT or LOSE IT !

Do-It-Yourself Crime Prevention



**Fact: 41% of all MI burglaries involve unlocked entries.
Don't let criminals steal what's yours!**



The Mercer Island Police Department (MIPD) is seeking to reduce the number of residential burglaries on the Island, and has been researching the best approach for changing behaviors. Although our burglary rate here is comparable to other nearby jurisdictions, MIPD believes that with citizens' help it can achieve the lowest burglary rate in the region.

A recent analysis of five years of MIPD crime data revealed some trends that may be surprising to some residents:

- Almost half of home burglaries annually involve an unlocked door (or window)
- Burglaries occur more than 1-2 times/week, on average
- 65% of the crimes occur during the day
- In 80% of the cases, no one was home

In May 2015, the MIPD conducted an online citizen survey to provide a more thorough understanding of the motivators for, and barriers to, locking doors. A total of **818** responses were received, spread evenly across the northern, central, and southern portions of the Island. Many residents revealed that they would like help remembering to lock doors, or would benefit from reading about actual incidents. A summary of the survey is available at: www.mercergov.org/files/MIPD_Burglary_Survey_WebJuly2015.pdf

Using these two sources of information, the MIPD has developed a full outreach campaign to increase the number of residents who *always lock all doors when away from home*:

LOCK IT or LOSE IT!



We may lose more than our possessions to the criminals who violate our homes and communities: we also lose our sense of security – the freedom to feel safe walking city streets after dark, going to a park alone, or letting our children walk home from school. We might even lose the ability to feel safe in our own homes. And the MIPD, no matter how effective, can't be everywhere at once.

We can't always get back possessions lost to crime, but we can do everything possible to prevent it in the first place and let would-be burglars know that Mercer Island is the wrong target. So the MIPD advises the following simple, effective measures:

- **Always lock your doors and windows**, even during a “5-minute errand”
- Trim bushes near the house that could conceal burglars
- Consider a burglar alarm system for your house
- Keep an eye out for unfamiliar vehicles prowling the neighborhood
- Consider outdoor lighting for shadowy areas
- Putting an inside light on a timer
- Let your neighbors know if you're going away on vacation or arrange a house-sitter
- Lock up extension ladders so they can't be used to reach the second floor
- Do not leave the garage door open when you're not around

Other measures (ask the MIPD for details, or call **206-275-7905**):

1. Start a “Block Watch” program with your neighbors
2. Join “Paws on Patrol” – a program for dog walkers to watch for suspicious activity
3. Check out www.crimemapping.com to see the latest MI burglary reports
4. Share your experiences and near-misses with neighbors
5. Read our Crime Prevention Booklet: www.mercergov.org/files/Crime_Prevention_2015.pdf

With some simple awareness, you can avoid stories like these:

July 2015: “My neighbor's home was broken into two nights ago. The burglar came in through a basement window that was left open to let cool air in. This thief was daring. The home was entered just after all but one family member left for a brief vacation....”

July 2015: “While we all know to lock doors and close things up, here is just a reminder to lock up! Early this morning a young man with a backpack was attempting to steal a mobile generator and who knows what else from our garage....”

And instead, be the hero of more stories like these:

June 2015: “MIPD caught an alleged bike thief on the bike path in the 9000 block of North Mercer Way; the arrest was made after a phone tip from an Island resident who was at the Community and Event Center picking up her kids, and noticed a suspicious a man walking by a bike rack multiple times....” [The thief ultimately cut some flimsy cables and walked away with two bikes.]

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