

DIOCESE OF SALISBURY

SECURITY IN CLERGY HOUSES

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Principal Police emphasis is on adequate domestic discipline and common sense rather than on sophisticated technical measures. The main sources of vulnerability are flat roofs, porches, drainpipes and nearby trees for first floor access; cellars and secluded positions for ground floor access; and the insecurity of garage doors and outhouses that give intruders easy access to garden tools, either for theft or as a means of access. Property in a very secluded location is particularly vulnerable, for instance where surrounded by high boundary walls.

Most breakins and thefts occur within a space of a few minutes. Even if the householder is in the garden and the house is unoccupied, Police advise that doors and windows should be locked. It is a regrettable sign of the times that some householders even make a practice of locking up downstairs while carrying out housework upstairs. In the particular circumstances of parsonage houses, short absences by the householder are frequently widely known and advertised, for example in the case of Church service times.

It is emphasised that all security is, at best, buying time rather than guaranteeing prevention of access. Most attempted theft is opportunist rather than professional and anything which will cause delay is an effective deterrent. For a professional who knows what he is seeking, access is very difficult indeed to prevent, although most avoid premises where there is a noisy dog.

Burglars in particular are largely opportunists and the last thing they want is a struggle to enter a property. Their favourite target is a house where a door or window has been left temporarily unfastened. 62% of burglaries occur at the rear of premises and 60% involve entry via windows.

The following guidance has been drawn from material produced by the Church Commissioners and based on recommendations of the Metropolitan Police Crime Prevention Unit and the London Fire Brigade.

FEATURES OF THE HOUSE AND GROUNDS

[a] **LOCKS:** A large number of products are available to supplement ordinary door and window locks. Normal security measures are provided or funded by the Diocesan Board of Finance [see below]. It is Police experience that intruders will break glass to attempt access to locks and keys, but are rarely willing to climb through apertures containing broken glass. Similarly intruders rarely attempt breakage of double panes of glass in double glazed units. Ground floor windows and those at upper levels easily accessible from roofs, walls and drainpipes should have security locks. These are not normally necessary for top hung ventilator windows as they are usually too narrow for intruder access.

Key security is very important and obviously keys must never be left in the lock. They should be kept out of sight but easily and rapidly accessible in case of fire or other immediate need [especially window keys]. The requirements of fire safety and of buildings security frequently conflict and it is a matter of personal choice as to which should have priority. Immediate access to door and window keys in each room is of vital importance.

[b] **WINDOWS:** When windows are closed both the latches and the casement stays should be firmly in place to reduce the possibility of windows being levered open.

Extractor fans fitted into the glazing are a high security risk since they are easy to remove for access to window latches.

A simple and inexpensive tip for increasing the security of sash windows or sliding secondary glazed units is merely to insert a garden cane into the window channel.

In the last resort, metal bars or steel roller blinds can be fitted to the frame provided that there are still adequate means of exit in case of fire.

- [c] **VALUABLES:** For security of cash and small valuables, the use of an underfloor safe is recommended. Items such as video equipment are highly sought after and should wherever possible be obscured from view. It is strongly recommended that photographic records are kept of all valuable articles, and these can also be marked with ultra violet pens so as to assist with subsequent identification.
- [d] **EXTERIOR LIGHTING:** A good level of exterior lighting both front and back is a good deterrent to vandals and burglars. The lights should be adjacent to all outside doors and can have automatic operation by passive infra red detectors or other means [in which case they should also be fitted with a manual override switch. Sometimes such a switch fitted in the master bedroom can increase a sense of security].
- [e] **INTRUDER ALARM SYSTEMS:** Alarm systems not only serve as a deterrent but in the event of burglary they alert neighbours and generate an element of fear and uncertainty in the criminal. A personal attack [or panic alert] button should be fitted with the alarm system which must be audible externally to neighbours as well as being of a frighteningly loud volume internally. There are many types of alarm system on the market but normally take the form of a combination of door sensors with interior photo electric or infra red detector sensors. For households looking to transfer privately funded systems to another house in due course, it is possible to purchase removable alarm systems [such as those that work through the power point network] which are easy to re-locate elsewhere.

Some contents insurers will only recognise installation of alarm systems by NACOSS approved contractors.

- [f] **LANDSCAPING:** The strategic siting of low to medium height prickly shrubs and bushes such as Barberry, Firethorn, Hawthorn and Holly [known as "hostile planting"] can help to persuade callers to use the designated path and can also be used in vulnerable areas around the house to deter climbing.

It is unwise to plant shrubs, hedges or trees which screen an outside door or window from neighbouring properties, as these can provide shelter for a potential intruder tampering with locks.

Although conflicting with the desirability for domestic privacy, the rule with regard to neighbouring properties is "see and be seen" from the point of view of intruder deterrence.

To reduce the risk of personal attack it is advisable to keep areas around entrance doors free of bushes and hedges in order to maintain maximum visibility.

OTHER SIMPLE PRECAUTIONS

There are a number of other day to day security measures that households can take in order to protect their homes:

- The Police welcome notification from householders about holiday dates etc. Clergy in particular will be aware that their absences are widely advertised in view of the need to publicise alternative arrangements for leading worship and so forth.
- When the house is to be left empty for more than a day, always tell a reliable neighbour or friend, but only tell those who need to know.

- Cancel all deliveries, milk and newspapers and ask someone to check that the post and free newspapers are not accumulating too obviously in the letter box. Alternatively, ask the Post Sorting Office to hold mail for your return.
- Ask a neighbour or friend to water the garden and indoor plants, mow the lawn and cut the hedge. They might also be asked to park their car occasionally on the drive or in front of the house and put the bin out on collection day.
- Keep garage doors shut and locked. If the garage has windows cover them internally. The absence of a car often demonstrates that nobody is at home.
- If everyone in the household has to be out until after dark, leave a light on in at least one room, and not just the entrance hall. A time switch or light sensitive fitting is a useful and inexpensive means of operating internal lights in your absence.
- Remember that curtains and blinds drawn in the day time attract thieves.
- Disconnect telephones that can be heard left ringing [particularly those on window cills]. Any answerphone messages should always indicate that you cannot come to the phone at present, rather than that you are absent.
- Where possible, check the credentials of unfamiliar callers. Ask for some identification if they claim to be officials and do not be fooled by a uniform. Some organisations use a password to help identify their representatives.
- The risk of forced access is considerably reduced by the use of a door chain, but it is acknowledged that many clergy find such use embarrassing and unwelcoming to the vast majority of visitors.
- Never hide a spare key outside.
- If the house is to be left empty it is a good idea to leave a radio on, and even better for it to be linked to a time switch.
- If someone is seen acting suspiciously, a simple "Can I help you?" should do the trick. Potential thieves do not like being noticed.
- If in a Neighbourhood Watch area, display a sticker in the front and back windows of the house.

DIOCESAN POLICY AND PROVISION

Diocesan owned or managed clergy houses are fitted with 5-lever mortice locks or equivalent security to entrance doors and suitable security locks to sliding patio doors. Spy hole door viewers and door chains are provided where requested by the household. Where absent, these features are normally provided at the next quinquennial repair contract, or earlier where necessary.

The Diocesan Board of Finance also pays for the supply and fitting of window locks. Replacement windows already have built-in security.

When conventional switched external lights require replacement, the Board will ensure that the new fitting comprises a passive infra red sensor and appropriate security light, if the household so wishes.

The Board does not routinely install or fund the provision of intruder alarm systems. It will however meet 50% of the installation cost of an approved system where so requested by a household, up to a maximum contribution limit of £600. The Board does not undertake to meet any ongoing costs of maintenance, servicing or repair of such installations.

The proper financial responsibility of the Board is confined to the protection of the buildings and their fixtures. Security of personal property whether inside or outside the house remains the responsibility and insurable liability of the householder.

Householders are asked to obtain the consent of the Board through the Property Manager or Diocesan Surveyor before installing privately funded security measures that involve cutting, drilling or otherwise affecting the fabric or structure of the building.

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