



IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT RECENT BURGLARIES IN WINDSOR SQUARE

18 December 2024

Dear Windsor Square Neighbors,

As you have probably heard, there has been an increase in burglaries recently in Windsor Square and surrounding neighborhoods. There are several commonalities to the recent burglaries we need to be aware of:

- Many of the recent burglaries have been “knock-knock” burglaries, with the perpetrator ringing the doorbell or knocking, and then immediately attempting to break into the home once they determine no one is inside. Of specific note is a person, usually a woman, coming up to the door with a dog on a leash to knock.
- Perpetrators are also commonly seen wearing athletic attire (sweats) and a sweatshirt hoody with the hood up over their heads, even on warm days. Many have been observed wearing a backpack as well. Perpetrators are frequently also observed wearing a full face covering or mask outdoors, even as COVID-related masking outdoors is becoming uncommon.
- While daytime burglaries are still common, burglars are increasing attempting break-ins in the evening hours between 6 pm and midnight, or later. We are aware of several such recent break-ins which occurred when the resident was still at home. This is called a “hot prowl burglary”. Thankfully, none of these recent hot prowl burglaries resulted in any harm to the residents of the home.
- Many of the burglaries have started in the same way, with 2 or 3 burglars jumping over a side fence or gate, and then breaking in through a back door or window.
- Another perpetrator typically waits in a getaway car, which may be parked several doors down the street. Often the getaway car is a late-model luxury sedan, but cars of all types have been observed.

- While many burglars wear masks and don't seem to care about burglar alarms or cameras; even so, a home with an alarm is 3x less likely to be targeted, and video evidence is very valuable for police.
- While most burglars don't seem to care about alarms or cameras, the LAPD has advised that thieves are using wi-fi jammers (illegal devices which flood wi-fi channels with spurious signals) to disrupt the wi-fi signals used by many consumer security cameras. LAPD has recovered several of these devices alongside stolen property during burglary arrests. We have also heard of recent incidents in Windsor Square where the cable providing internet service to the home may have been cut in advance of a burglary or attempted burglary.
- Prevention is critical -- burglars are exiting the premises (typically through the front door) within 6-10 minutes, making it difficult for LAPD or even private security like SSA or ADT to respond even if an alarm is triggered.

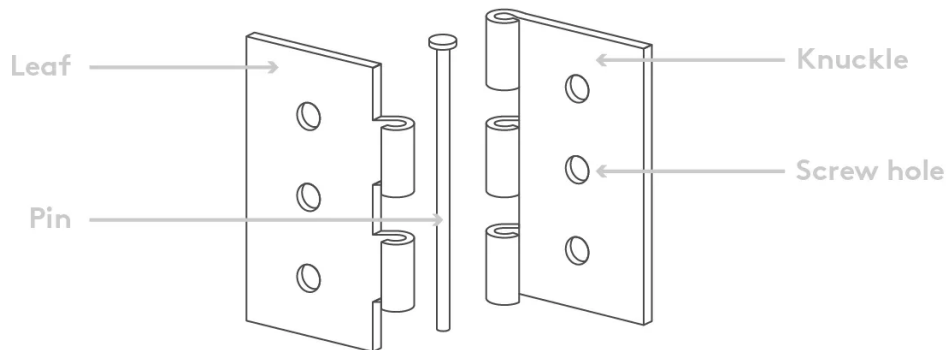
What can you do?

- **ALWAYS set your alarm.** Even when you are leaving for short errands. Set your alarm to "Home" or "Stay" mode when you are at home. If your alarm system or cameras have a geofencing mode that automatically arms them when you leave the home (based on the location of your mobile phone), make sure you enable that mode.
- **Ensure that your alarm system has glass break detectors.** Burglars breaking window glass, often at the rear of a house, is a very common initial entry method. Often, burglars will crawl through broken glass windows to avoid triggering a door-entry alarm.
- **Pay specific attention to the security of the back of your house,** especially doors and windows that may not be adequately secured. Many of the recent burglaries have occurred via a door or window at the rear of homes. Lock every door and window whenever you leave home.
- **Secure your main electrical panel or power shutoff if it is outside.** Using a padlock (key or combo) is a good cheap way to secure the box; however, the padlock shackle should be strong enough so it cannot be cut with a pair of bolt cutters. Alternately, call an electrician and have them install a locking electrical box that is difficult to break into. If your alarm system does not have a battery backup or does not send an alert when the power is off, contact your alarm company and have this fail-safe system installed. Besides putting a lock on your electrical panel you can have your alarm company install a magnetic contact switch on the door to the panel, just like the door and window contacts, already connected to the alarm system, but this contact point can be programmed to be "armed" at all times (even when the rest of your alarm system is disarmed) so if someone opens the electrical panel it will sound the alarm.

- **Install adequate exterior lighting and keep a few lights on when you leave the house.** Or set a timer or home automation routine to control your lights. Again, this makes your home look lived in, especially when you are away. Use motion-sensitive exterior lights, especially for backyards.
- **Consider “virtual” security guard options,** where a remote guard can view your exterior cameras and warn-off intruders. We have heard from one of our respected local security companies that this new technology may be the most effective in deterring burglaries. These services are available from Ring, Deep Sentinel, Simplisafe and other companies.
- **Get a video doorbell** or a similar device that allows you to answer the door when you are not home. Newer models have “full view” video that will show you the person at your door from head to toe and can even identify and alert you to packages left on the doorstep. Many of these video doorbells can allow you to automatically respond with a recorded message if it takes more than 5-10 seconds to answer the door.
- **Add cameras at other points around your home.** Ring, Nest and other brands make motion-sensing cameras that record motion, specifically from people, around your home. Cameras with automatic nighttime lighting that respond to motion are especially effective. If you have the option to hardwire security cameras rather than relying on wi-fi, this may help protect against the use of wi-fi jammers.
- **Backup Cellular Connection for your Alarm System.** If your security system communicates primarily over a landline or internet, you should have a backup internet connection, such as a cellular 4G/5G data connection, for your security system. This ensures that even if the main internet or landline is cut, your security systems stay operational. Some advanced alarm systems such as SimpliSafe come with cellular backup built in. Cellular frequencies are not the same as wi-fi frequencies and are unlikely to be affected by the use of wi-fi jammers. (Backup cellular is generally not used or available for camera systems given the internet bandwidth and speed requirements of video cameras.)
- **Please keep an eye on your block, and especially your closest neighbors.** Get to know your closest neighbors and what cars they drive, or which cars are typically parked in front of their homes. If you see a car that you don't recognize with someone just sitting or standing next to it, call ADT or SSA Security, or whatever private security company you subscribe to, to investigate. Take a picture of the license plate and the car with your cellphone. The LAPD has stressed that license plate numbers are the key information they are missing in many burglaries and attempted burglaries.
- **Bring your garbage and recycling bins in promptly on pickup day.** If your neighbor's cans are out late, take them in for them. Similarly, if you are out of town, have your neighbor, housekeeper or gardener put your trash cans out on

collection day, even if they are not full, and have them taken in by the end of the day.

- **Continue garden maintenance while you are away.** Make sure your lawn is mowed, leaves are raked, and walkways swept if you are away for a few days or more.
- **Leave a car in your driveway if you plan to be gone for more than a few days.** This makes your home look occupied.
- **Keep side or rear gates closed and locked at all times.**
- **Do not leave ladders in your yard!** Secure them inside your house or garage. Several burglaries in Hancock Park and Windsor Square have occurred when burglars used ladders found the side or back yards to access upper windows and patios.
- **Ensure packages and newspapers are picked up.** If you are away from home for more than a day, make sure that any packages, mail or newspapers are picked up while you are away.
- **Secure the Internet Cabling on the Outside of Your Home.** Given that some burglars are targeting internet cables to shut off cameras or alarm systems prior to entry, consider using protective conduit or metal casing where cables enter your home. This makes it more difficult to quickly cut the cables. It's also worth discussing additional security measures with your internet service provider or alarm system provider.
- **Door and window hinges.** Make sure that door and window hinge pins are on the inside (or at least secured so they are not removeable) to prevent them from being tampered with. If hinge pins are on the outside and removeable, burglars can often easily remove an entire door or window to gain entry.



- **Set Up Alarm and Internet Alert Notifications.** If your internet goes down, configure your security or camera system to send you a notification via cellular data. Again, some newer alarm systems do this automatically. That way, you can take immediate action, even if you are not at home.
- **Watch your surroundings carefully when you leave or arrive home.** Be watchful for suspicious cars or individuals who may be waiting for you to leave or arrive. If you see anything suspicious, circle the block again and check things out.
- **REPORT EVERYTHING OF NOTE.** Report crimes, attempted crimes, suspicious people and incidents of note. File a police report for all crimes with LAPD. Please also report ALL crimes or suspicious incidents to your Block Captain. If you don't know your Block Captain, please email blockcaptains@windsorsquare.org and we will connect you with them.

We don't want to frighten our neighborhood, but the number of burglaries is at a level where we all need to take a more active part in protecting our homes, and our neighborhood. It takes only a little more watchfulness to catch these burglars in the act or turn up a piece of evidence like a license plate that will lead to an arrest.

Thank you,

The Windsor Square Association
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