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## Home Security 101 – Got Key?

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Have you ever seen an ad in a catalog for objects that contain a hidden key compartment such as a rock with a false bottom, plant container or statuery? Unfortunately, so have thieves!

Placing a hidden key anywhere outside of your residence is taking a chance that a burglar is going to look for and find that key. The same goes for a hidden key on the outside of your vehicle. A key in a magnetic box on the underside of your vehicle is the first place some auto thieves look when considering stealing a car.

If you find it necessary to have a spare key to your residence or vehicle, consider leaving it at work or with a trusted neighbor or friend. However, make sure that wherever that spare key is kept that it is NOT labeled.



## What's Your Resolution?

It all starts with the very best of intentions....our New Year's resolutions. *I resolve to get more exercise, I resolve to spend less, I resolve to call home every week...* Whatever our resolution is, we know somewhere deep inside that it's going to be a struggle to keep it.

While some resolutions are for the purpose of changing how we look or how we live, some can deal with life and death or our safety and security. This year, think about creating some resolutions that will have an important effect on the safety of you, your family and your belongings. Think about **prevention resolutions**.

### I resolve to.....


- ✓ Lock and secure my car every time I get out and make sure that nothing is left inside that is visible to others.
- ✓ Lock up my home when I leave for the day, making sure that all windows and doors are fully closed and secure.
- ✓ Talk with my family about safety and develop a game plan for how any family member would react under a variety of circumstances where every moment counts.

What are the "threats" against you and your property? We know that crime can happen at anytime, in anyplace against any person. Are you doing your best to prevent this and if something did happen would you be prepared? Take time to think about and discuss with friends and family, what *could* happen and how best to prevent it.

## Illuminating Prevention

Burglars are always on the prowl for the home that is the easiest prey. Most burglars simply want to get in, take their loot and get out. Most have absolutely no interest in running into a resident and would do everything possible to make sure they never did.





Keeping your home well lit is an excellent step in burglary prevention. As much as burglars don't like to be "lit up," they also want to be sure your home is unoccupied. Here are some thoughts on *illumination* prevention:

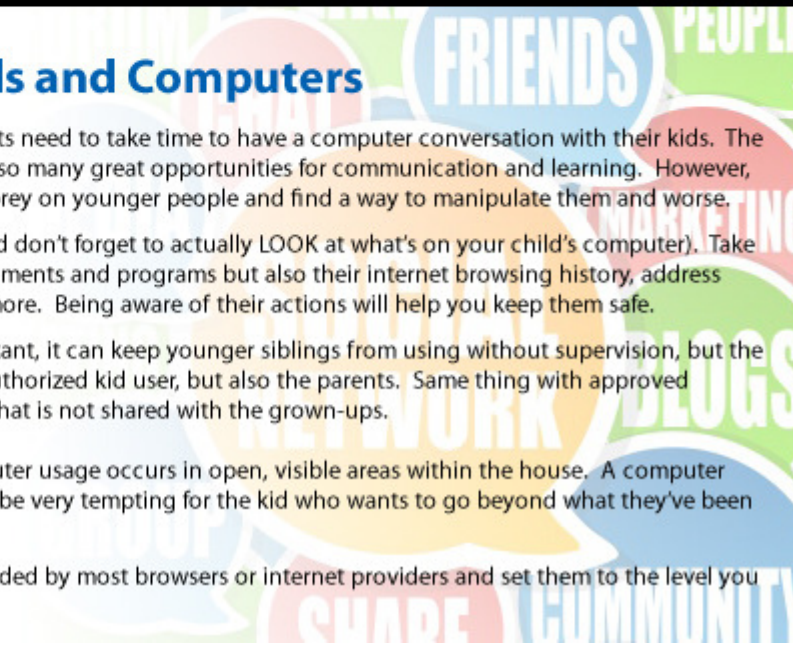
**Motion Detector Lighting** - When motion detection lighting first made its debut in the home market it was heralded as a new tool in burglary prevention, a "surprise" to would-be burglars. Certainly it is still a great tool, but no longer the surprise it once was.

However, motion detection does provide three important components in the battle against theft. **First**, it does still hold some "surprise" value. If a trespasser walks into an area with a motion detector, the light activation could be a signal that someone is home and has turned on the lights. For many thieves, taking a risk on a home where possibly someone is home, is just not worth it. **Second**, if you have educated your neighbors about your lighting systems, it will be a notice to them when it activates. It will alert them, especially when you are not home, that someone may be in your yard. **Third**, and most importantly, it alerts YOU! A light activating in your backyard is an alert to you that something or someone is in the yard.

**Lighting up the house** - As mentioned, lighting does indicate that a burglar's worst nightmare might come true: YOU ARE AT HOME! Putting lights on timers inside of your residence, set for the normal times you use your lights, will remind would-be thieves that there may just be someone home and it's not worth the risk.

**Lights on all the time** - While every kilowatt of electricity adds up on the electric bill, it's not always a bad investment to leave some lights on. It can be argued both ways that a light on at your front porch may indicate someone is not at home; it can also be just the tool that is needed to expose and deter someone from standing at your door and attempting to force it open. The same goes for other areas in your yard, where they may be subject to a burglar looking for the right access. A well-lit yard may make it impossible for a thief to sneak up and begin his criminal acts of trying to get into your home.

## Monthly 2do List – Kids and Computers



Not only this month, but every month, parents need to take time to have a computer conversation with their kids. The internet, social networking, chat....there are so many great opportunities for communication and learning. However, these are also "opportunities" for persons to prey on younger people and find a way to manipulate them and worse.

Take time today to have a computer chat (and don't forget to actually LOOK at what's on your child's computer). Take a peek at not only what's stored in their documents and programs but also their internet browsing history, address books, downloads, chat conversations and more. Being aware of their actions will help you keep them safe.

Passwords to access the computer are important, it can keep younger siblings from using without supervision, but the password must be one known by both the authorized kid user, but also the parents. Same thing with approved websites; there should never be a password that is not shared with the grown-ups.

Where's that computer? Make sure all computer usage occurs in open, visible areas within the house. A computer used in a closed room with no oversight can be very tempting for the kid who wants to go beyond what they've been instructed.

Use parental controls! Use the controls provided by most browsers or internet providers and set them to the level you feel comfortable with.

You should be their first "friend!" A social networking page for age appropriate children can be a great way to communicate with friends, but their first "friend" needs to be you! Routinely check in and see what's being posted, who their friends are and the conversations they are having. Having their password allows you to log in and see beyond what all their friends see and will give you the opportunity to monitor their chat conversations.

Have a conversation! Not just this month, but every month, talk about your expectations, what's appropriate usage and why you must be careful on the internet. Discuss what is appropriate information to release (and to whom) and what is not appropriate and could put your child at risk. Set the boundaries, educate them on the boundaries and check to make sure those boundaries are observed.

Want to learn more? There are many organizations that have great information on protecting you and your child from internet predators.

**Netsmartz** – National Center for Missing and Exploited Children – [www.netsmartz.org](http://www.netsmartz.org)

**Getnetwise** – Coalition of organizations for internet safety – [www.getnetwise.org](http://www.getnetwise.org)

**McGruff.org** – National Crime Prevention Council – [www.mcgruff.org](http://www.mcgruff.org)

## Avoiding an Accident – It's Not That Hard

A car stops abruptly in front of you; an animal runs across the road, a child darts out into traffic. All of these unfortunate situations and more can happen in the blink of an eye. For every mile per hour you travel you are increasing your stopping distance and reducing your ability to avoid a collision. Speed limits are set to maximize the potential for safe driving based on road type, size and conditions. Exceeding the speed limit isn't only a violation of the law, it is a life safety issue. TODAY and everyday monitor your speed to make sure that you are not exceeding legal limits or traveling faster than is safe for conditions.

Slow down and keep the distance between you and the vehicle in front far enough to not only allow for a slow, smooth, stopping or slowing motion, but still have enough room for those emergency fast stops. A little extra room and a little less speed go a long way.

Danger isn't only present when exceeding the speed limit, it can occur when you first start up – from a stop. Be sure to look both ways and confirm that vehicles are stopped or stopping when proceeding from a 4-way intersection (whether it's controlled by signs or lights). Especially in stoplight controlled intersections, we all know how those in a hurry will attempt to beat the red light and sometimes they are not very successful, entering the intersection after the light has turned red (and probably at a speed exceeding the posted limit). Once the light turns green, don't expect everyone to stop...ensure they stop!

A person's driving "skills" (or lack of) are not the only factor in accidents; the condition of the vehicle can play an important role in vehicle safety and crash avoidance. Poorly inflated, or low tread on tires can reduce the tire's ability to grab onto the road surface, especially during periods where the road is slick. This reduces the operator's ability to control the vehicle and puts everyone at risk. Have your tires routinely checked by a professional to make sure that you have the right amount of tread to keep you safe.

Likewise, and as obvious as it may be to some, faulty brakes can be a serious issue. Each year there are accidents involving vehicles with brakes in poor condition. In many cases, the driver hoped to "just get a few more miles out of the brakes." They planned to drive safely and avoid any sudden stops, but as they later found out, you can only control your actions, not the actions of others, and one quick stop leads to complete brake failure. Don't take chances, when the brakes are showing signs of wear or are ready for a routine inspection, take the time to make sure they pass a brake check-up.

Using caution while driving, being aware of posted laws and regulations, coupled with making sure your vehicle is in good working order, will help create safe travels for you and your family.



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