

# **Overland Park (KS) Police Department**

## **Residential Security Initiative**

**June 28, 2006**

**Overland Park Police Department**

**Chief John Douglass**

## **Summary**

### **Scanning**

In the summer of 1996, an Overland Park (KS) neighborhood was devastated when women were sexually assaulted during the course of four home invasions. At the request of residents, the Police Department ventured into the community and conducted countless residential security surveys. At the time of the invasions, common recommendations for securing a home included the installation of an alarm system, the use of a deadbolt with a one-inch throw and installing three-inch screws through the strike plate of the door frame. However, one door type, the side-light entry way, caused officers concern because there were no known recommendations for securing it. The Police Department partnered with two homebuilders and began testing various methods for securing doors. The tests identified vulnerabilities in securing different door types. Testing also resulted in follow up investigation regarding the crime of burglary and previously suggested security strategies to prevent it.

### **Analysis**

The results of the tests conducted in cooperation with the homebuilders called into question long standing crime prevention strategies. Additional assistance was requested from other law enforcement agencies, criminologists and private sector security practitioners. The analysis of research resulted in a comprehensive and thorough change in the Police Department's programs and recommendations.

### **Response**

A greater emphasis was placed on addressing the physical security of the house. Once the vulnerabilities in the door assemblies were addressed, the Police Department developed partnerships with other city departments to draft a residential security ordinance. Working with building code officials, homebuilders and city council members an ordinance was drafted and submitted to the City Council. In January 1999, the City of Overland Park adopted a residential security ordinance that mandated a minimal level of security into newly constructed single family homes. At the same time, the Police Department updated and revised every aspect of the residential security program.

### **Assessment**

The assessment of the work done by the Police Department examined data from 1997 to 2005. Although the data is not conclusive, it is promising. From 1997 to 2000 the number of residential burglaries decreased from 537 in 1997 to 261 in 2000. However, from 2001 to 2005, the number of burglaries slightly increased. It should be noted the population of Overland Park has steadily grown within the same time period from 135,029 in 1997 to 166,917 in 2005. More important than the data was the effort made to modify and revise security recommendations provided to the community. The Police Department is confident its residential security initiative is one of the most comprehensive and thorough in the country.

## Scanning

In the summer of 1996, an Overland Park neighborhood was devastated when women were sexually assaulted after four home invasions. Following extensive media coverage, the community was gripped by fear.

The Police Department responded to these incidents by holding a neighborhood meeting with 700 Overland Park residents. At the request of the residents, the Police Department's Crime Prevention Unit went into the community and conducted more than 200 residential security surveys in two weeks.

During the visits, the officers encountered a popular door-type referred to as the "side-lighted entryway." At the time, security recommendations for these doors were: to

secure it with three-inch screws, anchoring the strike plate to the wall structure; to use a deadbolt with a one-inch throw; to consider an alarm system; and/or to increase lighting around the perimeter of the house.

Since the "side-lighted entryway" could not accept three-inch screws - it could possibly contact the tempered glass, shattering it - the officers struggled to

make sufficient recommendations for securing this door type, leaving many residents with a sense of hopelessness.



**Side-lighted entryway**

The officer's frequent encounter with this type of door caused them to reach out to the private sector where they found and formed a partnership with Dave Allen and Ron Olberding of Edward Wayne Industries. Allen and Olberding constructed a wall section in a small warehouse so they could physically test door assemblies against

typical burglary entry methods. The Police Department was invited to witness and participate in the attacks. Following several tests on different door assemblies, it was discovered that nearly all door types and assemblies were insecure according to the recommendations being made by the Police Department.



Door edge is vulnerable to splitting

In 1997, OPPD realized other security strategies commonly made by the Police Department may be inadequate. Officers Michael Betten and Todd George began to seek assistance from other Police Departments and the private sector, including Constable Herni Berube and Tom McKay of the Peel Regional Police Department's Crime Prevention Unit. In addition to sharing information with Berube and McKay, Betten independently researched burglary methods. Using information provided by criminologists, including Paul Cromwell at Wichita State University and Scott Decker and Richard Wright at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, all previous security recommendations were scrutinized and compared against what the research supported, leading to the development of new sound security strategies.

## **Analysis**

### *Alarm Systems*

For decades, the alarm system has been considered the "first line of defense" for protecting people and valuables. Alarms are recommended by police and security

professionals and are believed to be a primary means of protection for many homeowners. However, there is one persistent problem with alarm systems - the false alarm rate.

The false alarm rate has plagued the alarm industry for many years, averaging 95 to 98 percent across the country, according to the International Association of Chiefs of Police. The alarm industry's response has been to implement longer delays before systems notify central stations; to call second or third parties, further delaying notification to the Police Department; and/or to have municipalities fine alarm users for frequent nuisance alarms. The delay in police notification has been identified as a fundamental flaw with most security systems.

Further scrutiny of alarms revealed other major problems when developing sound security practices. During residential security surveys, the vast majority of residents expressed concerns about protecting family members while the house is occupied. Many residents turned to alarm systems, but problems were identified. First, all residential alarms were designed to activate once someone got into the house. Second, and the most serious problem recognized, was the resident's inability to dial 9-1-1 while the system was notifying the central station via the phone line. Dialing 9-1-1 is the best method of notifying the police in the event of an emergency. The call goes directly into police communications, officers immediately know the location of the problem and verification of criminal intent can be communicated to field units allowing for an appropriate response.

The alarm activation itself is not communication of criminal activity and generally dictates a low level response by police. Most law enforcement agencies and residential

alarm users were unaware of this problem since it rarely was mentioned by the alarm industry. It should be noted this was only a problem when the alarm is armed while the house is occupied. Officer Betten scrutinized panic and hold-up alarms and came to the same conclusion: their value to a resident was questionable (See Holdup-silent alarm, October, 2004).

### *House Watch Program*

The Crime Prevention Unit scrutinized the established vacation house watch program. Residents would notify the Police Department when they were going to be away on vacation. The Police Department would offer to check the house periodically to ensure it was secure and to offer the residents a sense of security. The Police Department would distribute a list to officers each day, asking them to check the houses on their list, as duty permitted. When records were reviewed, houses on the watch program were not being checked as frequently as hoped. When the program was scrutinized against the burglary research, several problems arose. First, the greatest deterrent to most burglars is the illusion of occupancy. Second, burglars often operated during the day and did their surveillance from the street in an area where they felt most comfortable, namely neighborhoods close to home or work.

The problem with the program became apparent - officers would respond to a house on the watch list, check the exterior doors, and then leave. This action likely indicated the house was vacant. Officers paid little attention who may be watching them. A committee was assembled to review the program, at which time, no research or documentation could show the program was a proven crime deterrent. The committee concluded the program offered a false sense of security to the residents, and the

individuals best suited to watch the resident's house were the neighbors (House Watch Revision memo attached).

### *Children Home Alone*

Child safety, or "Stranger Danger," is another popular presentation the Crime Prevention Unit is asked to provide to the public. Many advocacy groups, security practitioners, and law enforcement officers have recommended that children, who are home alone during the day, remain quiet if a stranger knocks on the door so he/she believes the home is vacant. The Crime Prevention Unit examined the recommendations and compared it against criminal research. Once again, problems were discovered. Most research pointed to "occupancy" as being a significant deterrent to burglars, yet this scenario involved a child's safety. By creating the illusion the house is vacant, a burglar will incorrectly assume that to be true. With a child in the house alone, this could be a dangerous situation.

While the Crime Prevention Unit was conducting research on sex offenders, they discovered an interesting bit of information that pertained to this topic. Research conducted by the Virginia prison system and "Obsession" author John Douglas suggested that many sex offenders have a common crime in their criminal history - burglary. The Crime Prevention Unit then began to question the practice that children should remain quiet, creating the illusion the house is vacant. The Police Department came to the conclusion that security recommendations for children staying home alone needed to change.

### *Physical Security*



The attack on doors continued for nearly a year, but the vulnerable mechanisms were identified, reinforced and secured by Edward Wayne Industries. The four main components of the door assembly were identified: door, frame, deadbolt and hinges. The end result were recommendations made by the Police



Department to secure entryways that had been tested and proven to slow down even the most determined burglars. The recommendations were simple, inexpensive, aesthetically pleasing and proven to be effective.

For several years, Overland Park, Kansas was a leader in new home construction in the Kansas City metropolitan area. While conducting surveys, the Police Department made sure all recently constructed homes were built using solid doors with deadbolts - the core components necessary to properly secure a door assembly. Yet, as proven in many tests by the Police Department and Edward Wayne Industries, these assemblies were vulnerable to being kicked in by burglars.

The Police Department felt that if homebuilders would incorporate the security measures at construction, whole neighborhoods would benefit from the additional security. The Police Department inquired about working with the home builders association on promoting a residential security program which would secure the exterior doors. They had tried a similar program, "Shield of Security," in the early 1980s, but homebuilders did not participate. Interviews with city building officials expressed a similar experience with voluntary programs sponsored by the homebuilders. Voluntary

programs through the homebuilders association received little support and were difficult to sustain.

While discussing the problem with the Peel Regional Police Department Constable Berube, he mentioned he had a residential security ordinance draft for his community that had not been adopted. Officer Betten began to follow up on the possibility of drafting an ordinance for Overland Park. He discovered that a similar ordinance was drafted by Robert Gardner, CPP, and passed in Thousand Oaks, California, in the 1980's. When contacted by Betten, Gardner said the ordinance had been in effect for more than a decade and had cut burglaries by a significant margin. He mailed Betten a copy of the Thousand Oaks ordinance, which, with the help of the private sector, homebuilders and local city departments, was revised to fit the needs of Overland Park.

## **Response**

The Crime Prevention Unit immediately revised recommendations regarding residential security and began to emphasize to residents that they should address the physical security of the house. With help from Edward Wayne Industries, recommendations were sound and tested. The revised recommendations were incorporated into literature, surveys and presentations. The work done on residential security in Overland Park was recognized by the private sector. Officer Betten was asked to review test methods to determine a window unit's ability to resist forced entry with an American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) committee. Officer Betten's participation with the committee allowed him to network with individuals from many major manufacturers of windows and glazing material. His participation with the ASTM

committee generated comprehensive recommendations when addressing window security (See reports to ASTM committee).

### *Physical Security Ordinance*

The information collected regarding a residential security ordinance pointed to a viable and positive option. The OPPD quickly revised the proposals made by Peel and Thousand Oaks, California, and submitted the idea of an ordinance to a city council sub-committee. Following an extensive council debate and meetings with homebuilders and home owners, the city of Overland Park adopted and implemented a residential security ordinance pertaining to the construction of new homes. The ordinance was implemented in January, 1999. The ordinance applies to all single family dwellings and all exterior entryways and includes provisions for lighting and house numbers.

A few months following the passage of the ordinance, security products were readily available. Competition brought down prices on security hardware and entire communities were receiving the security hardware they needed. The ordinance has been in effect since 1999, and three other neighboring jurisdictions - Lenexa, Olathe, and Shawnee, Kansas - have adopted the same provisions with no opposition by homebuilders.

### **Other Programs**

Following the extensive research done by the OPPD and Edward Wayne Industries, the recommendations by the Crime Prevention Unit began to change. When conducting residential security surveys, emphasis was placed on addressing the physical security of the home. When compared to an alarm, the physical security

offered a proven and cost efficient method for securing the house. The physical security was not dependent upon police response or electricity nor was it subject to nuisance alarm fees. It delayed burglars from getting in, and over time, was far less expensive for the homeowner. Alarms were mentioned as an option to compliment the physical security, but primarily encouraged as a method for monitoring the house when vacant. The officers conducting surveys based recommendations on threat and risk assessments after establishing what the individual perceived to be their biggest threat. Recommendations were made based on the resident's needs, perceived threats and monetary limitations.

The committee which assembled to review the house watch program concluded it offered no deterrence to burglars and should be discontinued. The recommendations were submitted to the Chief of Police, and the program was eliminated. Individuals that called requesting the program were directed to the crime prevention officer, who explained why the program was eliminated. Once homeowners were informed, they were appreciative of the work done and many scheduled residential security surveys. The surveys provided additional one-on-one contact with the homeowners to discuss further residential security matters. Residents were better informed and officers in patrol were able to dedicate more time to problem areas.

Recommendations for children staying home alone changed. Children were instructed to go to the door, make noise, yell for mom or dad, but NOT to open the door. Parents were encouraged to address the physical security of the house to keep perpetrators out. Parents were receptive to the new practice given the amount of time and research done by the Police Department.

The Police Department then began to distribute the information using:

\* Officer Training: All officers received training on information pertaining to residential security. Following burglaries, officers were better equipped to address the needs of the residents and were likely to refer victims to the Crime Prevention Unit for more extensive information or to schedule a residential security survey.

\* False Alarm Prevention Class: This class was originally designed to teach alarm users the limitations of their alarm system and the impact false alarms have on police resources. Following the initiative of the OPPD, a 30 minute segment of the class was dedicated to implementing proper security strategies. One of the most frequent comments on participant's reviews of the class is "I wish we would have had this class before we purchased our alarm system." The class has continually received very positive reviews and has produced many requests for commercial and residential security surveys.

\* Residential Security Brochure: In 2001, the Police Department drafted a brochure regarding residential security. The brochure was first printed and then distributed to residents when a residential security survey was conducted. The brochure evolved into a digital format, which is now readily available to residents who access the city's Web page, [www.opkansas.org](http://www.opkansas.org), or it can be emailed to residents requesting the information. The brochure explains, in detail, how to properly secure a door and which window assemblies are most secure. The brochure also includes information on dogs, and how they are a deterrent to burglars.

\* City's Web Page: The information on the city's Web page reflected the work done by the Police Department, which in turn, resulted in more requests for residential security surveys.

\* Residential Security Survey: Although the survey had been a service offered to residents for many years, the recommendations changed dramatically. The change included a video presentation of the door tests conducted over the years, in cooperation with Edward Wayne Industries. The addition of the visual aid reflected on the positive feed back received by the Police Department. The video helped emphasize how quickly criminals could get in, while showing how proper security hardware can increase the security to the homeowner.

\* Media Coverage: Probably one of the most effective means for reaching out to the public were burglary events that received media coverage. The Police Department, in cooperation with Edward Wayne Industries, worked to schedule interviews at the test facility so media crews could record actual door attacks. The visual image of individuals kicking on doors resulted in numerous follow up calls inquiring about home security.

\* American Society for Testing and Materials: The work resulted in participation by Officer Betten with the ASTM task force that reviewed window security. Participation with the ASTM committee further provided valuable information regarding window security and the availability of security glazing products.

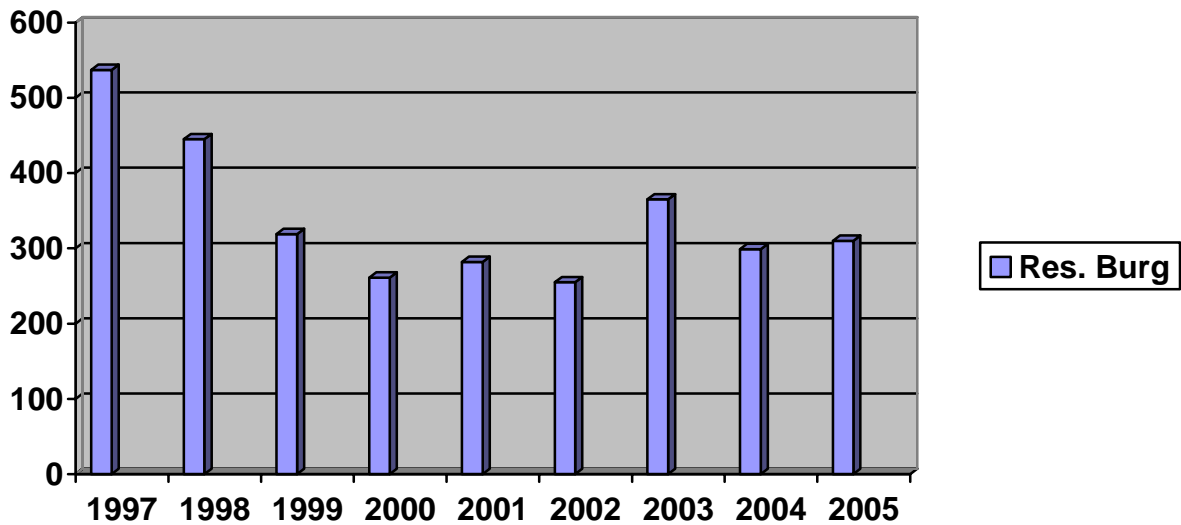
## **Assessment**

Analysis of the data regarding the Police Department's crime prevention initiative is promising. Although the statistics are not conclusive, the figures suggest a positive

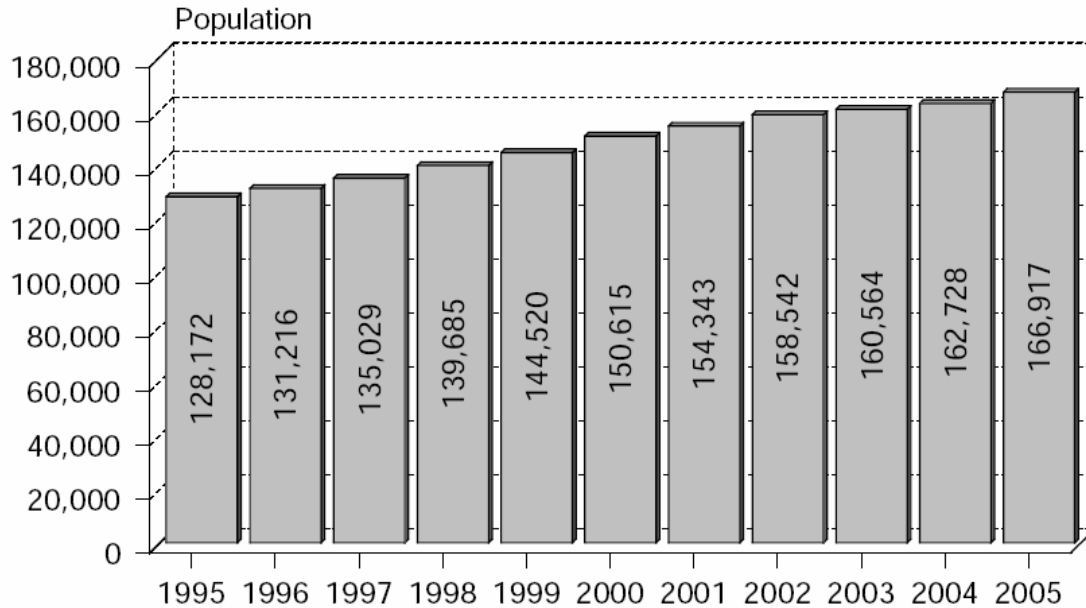
impact on the number of residential burglaries. From 1997 to 2000, the city experienced a significant drop in the number of residential burglaries, from 537 to 261. However, from 2001 to 2005, the number of residential burglaries slightly increased. This should be expected provided the growth and economic status of Overland Park from 1997 to 2005. From 1997 to 2005, the city's population grew from 135,029 to 166,917 with an estimated day time population of more than 175,000.

### Number of residential burglaries for Overland Park, KS

1997 to 2005



# Population Growth 1995 to 2005 City of Overland Park



## Estimated Daytime Population in the Metro Area's Top 10 Cities

City	Total 2000 Population	Total Workers Working in City	Estimated Daytime Population	Daytime Population % Change Due to Commuting
Blue Springs, MO	48,080	14,265	36,377	-24.3%
Independence, MO	113,288	38,653	97,427	-14.0%
Kansas City, KS	146,866	71,275	156,540	6.6%
Kansas City, MO	441,545	310,520	543,511	23.1%
Leavenworth, KS	35,420	17,347	37,772	6.6%
Lee's Summit, MO	70,700	27,744	61,563	-12.9%
Lenexa, KS	40,238	43,202	60,469	50.3%
Olathe, KS	92,962	41,196	83,071	-10.6%
<b>Overland Park, KS</b>	<b>149,080</b>	<b>106,193</b>	<b>175,506</b>	<b>17.7%</b>
Shawnee, KS	47,996	15,087	36,206	-24.6%

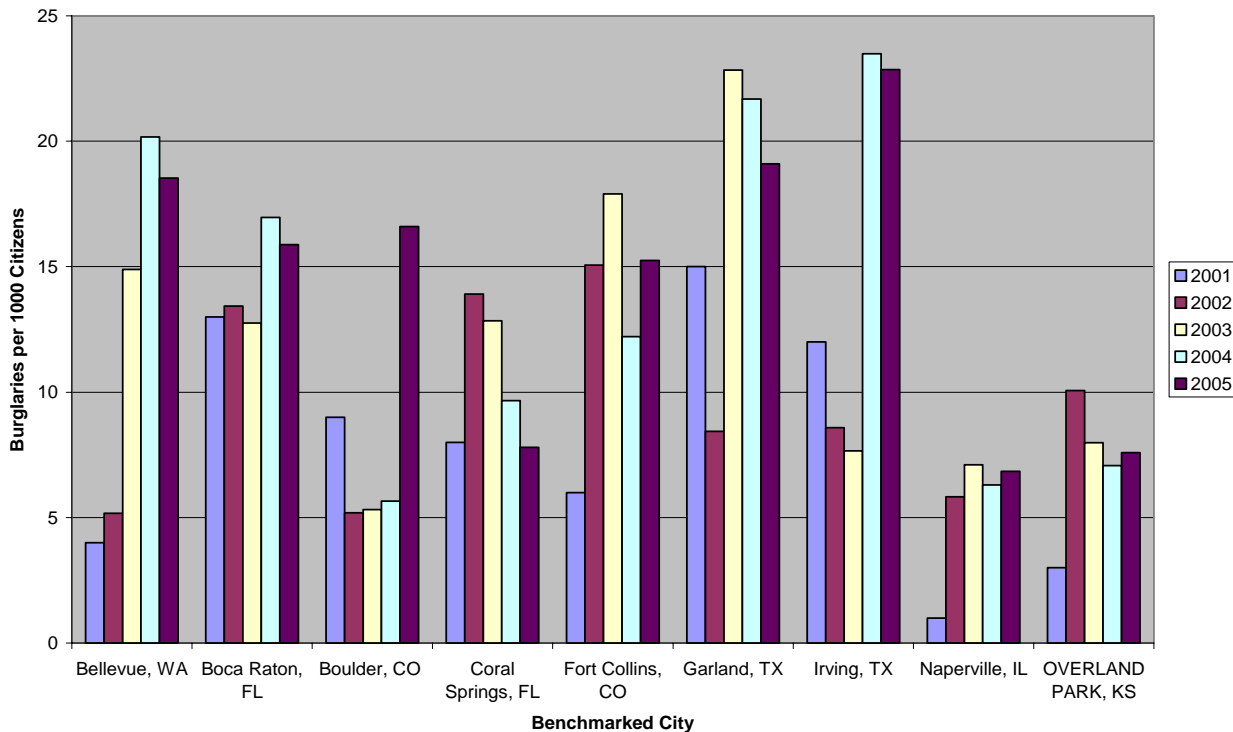
Source: U.S. Census

In 2000, the Police Department began to compare its crime rate, particularly burglaries, to other “benchmark” cities. Although the incidents of burglary reviewed



included commercial, multi-family and residential properties, it would provide an idea of how the City of Overland Park was managing its burglary problem. It should be noted that many of the security practices and strategies implemented for single family dwellings also were incorporated into commercial businesses. Most businesses came into contact with the Crime Prevention Unit through the false alarm prevention class. This session provided the Police Department an opportunity to discuss security strategies in the commercial environment. The false alarm class primarily reached residential alarm users trying to avoid false alarm fees; however, frequent contact with commercial and small retail businesses also occurred. The data available for other municipalities spanned the time frame from 2000 to 2005. The chart provided compares the following cities: Bellevue, WA; Boca Raton, FL; Boulder, CO; Coral Springs, FL; Fort Collins, CO; Garland, TX; Irving, TX and Naperville, IL.

**Burglaries by City**

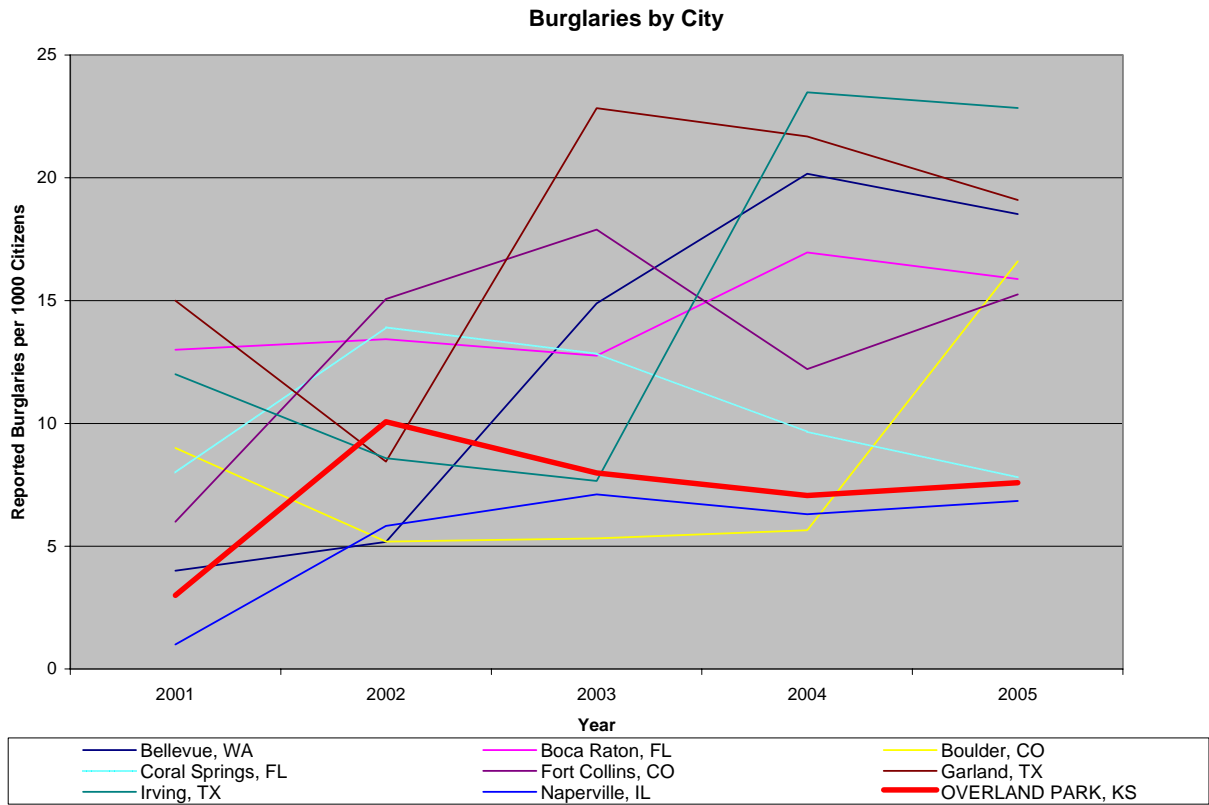


This chart displays the reported yearly burglaries (per 1,000 citizens) for the benchmarked cities. As illustrated, Overland Park showed a decrease in the number of reported burglaries during the time period, 2002-04. In 2005, Overland Park reported the second lowest number of burglaries (7.6), even after observing a slight increase from 2004.

Overland Park’s residential security program evolved from the cookie cutter recommendations to a progressive and comprehensive analysis of each individual’s home. Recommendations were developed from thorough risk and threat analysis, addressing the concerns of each individual resident that requested security information. The Overland Park Police Department is confident that the information shared with the community is sound and practical advice. Residents continually express their appreciation for the program when provided with visual evidence of the effectiveness of the physical security measures. The residential security presentation, which was

developed with assistance by Edward Wayne Industries, provided an informative and entertaining program.

As a result of the work done by the Overland Park Police Department, the residential security ordinance was adopted by three neighboring jurisdictions: Olathe, Lenexa and Shawnee, Kansas. The program has received recognition from the National Crime Prevention Conference. On two different occasions, Officer Betten, with the assistance of Edward Wayne Industries, provided presentations with actual demonstrations to participants attending the conference. The presentation always received positive feedback and was the highest rated session in the two years it was presented. The group partnered with Professor Paul Cromwell of Wichita State and provided local law enforcement a training session on residential burglary and providing the community with effective countermeasures. Other groups and organizations which requested presentations included the University of Minnesota Annual Building and Code Officials Conference, Missouri Crime Prevention Association, Omaha (NE) Police Department, False Alarm Prevention Association, State Farm and Solutia Incorporate of St. Louis.



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## Revisions of Vacation House Watch Program SOP 200-07

### Overview of Recommendation:

The purpose of this paper is to document proven methods of how burglars operate. The documentation supports claims by the committee that the current methods incorporated by SOP 200-07 are not beneficial to the homeowner or police department, but may actually do more harm than good.

### Observations:

- ✓ Burglars operate during day light hours when most residents are not home.
- ✓ The single most effective deterrent to a burglar is the “illusion of occupancy.”
- ✓ Burglars case or survey a house prior to burglarizing it.
- ✓ Burglars attempt to blend into the neighborhood
- ✓ Burglars are easily deterred by incorporating simple prevention strategies.

In all this research, prevention programs are vastly targeted at educating the community and encouraging cohesiveness. Those houses that are most vulnerable are those that appear vacant or offer little surveillance from neighbors. But note that many of the residential burglars operate during the day and choose their targets after some surveillance. One study mentions that the burglar typically selects targets in the following sequence 1) the desirability of the neighborhood, 2) selection of the block, and finally 3) selecting the actual house. Nowhere in all these articles and publications is it mentioned that officers occasionally checking houses serves as a crime prevention tool. So the question has to be asked, if burglars operate during the day and conduct their surveillance during the day, is the Vacation House Watch Program actually effective or creating a liability?

Cromwell, Paul F.; Olson, James N.; Avary, D'Aun Wester (1991) ***BREAKING AND ENTERING: An Ethnographic Analysis of Burglary***. Sage Publication

“Although the average burglar fears being seen, many professional burglars do not. Rather, *they fear being seen and reported*. The experienced burglars stated that it was important to fit into a neighborhood or situation. They attempted to make their presence in a neighborhood seem normal and natural. The most professional burglar in our study, Robert, always drove a car that fit the neighborhood’s socioeconomic level or a van disguised as delivery vehicle...Other time he would stop his car near a proposed target residence, open the hood, tinker around under the hood, appear to be angry, kick a tire and angrily walk over to the potential target house...” (page 36)

Using Risk Cues: We found that most burglar use a simple yet highly efficient three component decision-making strategy. The decision model rests on two assumptions. The first assumption is that burglars are not attempting to maximize outcomes. They are generally seeking satisfactory target choices rather than optimal ones. The decision model can best be described a *satisficing* strategy rather than an optimizing one... Do the immediate risks exceed the minimal expectation of gain? (page 37)

The first component of operating assumption is: “Someone will see and report me.” The second component addresses occupancy. The operating assumption is: “Someone is home.” The third component concerns accessibility. The essential features of accessibility concern the ease of access and exit. The operating assumption is: “Entry is too difficult.” The burglar makes an initial assumption (Someone will observe and report my activity), assumes that it is true, and then searches the immediate physical environment for evidence that contradicts it. If a contradiction is found (the neighborhood appears deserted), the initial assumption is rejected.

When only two conclusions can logically be reached, the alternative conclusion is accepted by default (No one will observe or report my activity). (page 39)

We found that burglars are opportunistic and are easily deterred or displaced from on target site to another. Situational factors such as the presence of a dog, an alarm system, security hardware, and alert neighbors may be the most effective deterrents. When one or more of these risk cues are discerned by the burglar, the target is usually considered too risky and the burglary is aborted. (page 40)

The authors concluded that the number of caretakers (guardians) at home during the day has decreased because more women are participating in the work force, leaving a greater percentage of homes unguarded during the day. With the decline of the traditional neighborhood, other guardians (friends, neighbors) have dwindled. Furthermore, the supply of marketable, easily transportable goods has increased, making the volume of available targets much greater. (page 44)

The normal activities of criminals also affect crime rates. Offenders are more likely to commit crimes if their daily activities bring them into contact with potential victims. When questioned as to how a particular residence was selected as a burglary target, the responses given by informants were frequently consistent with routine activities theory. Jesse, professional burglar, stated:

*“When I was younger I used to ride my bicycle over to the skating rink. If I saw a house that I liked while I was coming to the rink, I’d do it on the way home.”*

Ramon, Jesse’s co-offender, explained his approach to target selection:

*“When I’m going to work or over to a friend’s house or someplace, I keep my eyes out for a good place to hit. I’ve been watching this one house on my way to work for a couple of weeks.”* (page 45)

These results tend to suggest that as burglars go about their everyday activities, traveling to and from activity hubs such as school, work, and recreational facilities, they come into contact with residential sites near those facilities. Residences on or near their transportation routes are also potential burglary targets. When burglars stop at a nearby and may choose a potential target during those moments. It is possible that this accounts for the disproportionate selection of conrener houses as burglary targets. (page 46)

Prevention: Burglars fear being seen or identified and reported to the police while casing the neighborhood or committing the burglary. Consequently, the most effective prevention strategy is composed of “nosy neighbors,” alert and vigilant persons who know their neighborhood and know the habits of those who live nearby. (page 95)

The most important ingredient of a situational crime prevention approach to burglary is to give a residence the illusion of occupancy. Nearly all (95%) burglars will avoid an occupied residence. The most important of all the steps the burglar takes in arriving at a decision to break into a targeted residence is to determine whether or not anyone is at home. (page 98)

Buck, A.; Hakim, Simon (1992) “WHAT MAKES A GOOD BURGLARY SITE” ***Security Distributing and Marketing*** Dated: April 1992 (pages 68-69)

Burglars select a neighborhood, then a street, then a specific property. Accessibility is the most important consideration. Being located with 3 blocks of a major thoroughfare makes a home twice as likely to be burglarized; in these areas, an alarm system reduces risk by more than two. Isolation and expensiveness also are risk factors... Contrary to popular belief, homes near youth – gathering places and in areas of high pedestrian traffic are not attractive to burglars. Burglars are not particularly imaginative in deciding on point of entry – 70% enter through the front or back door. Effective deterrents include a car in the driveway, an alarm

company sign in the yard, exterior and interior lights, a deadbolt lock, and an alarm system. Surprisingly, results indicate that dogs are not much of a deterrent.

Arnold, R.T. (1972) **THE BURGLARS ARE COMING**. Arnold publishing  
It should be pointed out here that more and more daytime burglaries are taking place. Unattended apartments and houses are becoming increasingly easy prey for the burglar. The daytime rate of residence burglary has increased 337 percent in the past ten years. (page 16)

There are so many burglars these days that he could be your next door neighbor, the teenager down the street or the man or woman who works next to you. There are some teenagers who burglarize for kicks or for money to spend to impress their peer group. There are part time burglars who steal to supplement a low paying job in order to support their family. There are also the dope addicts, in all age brackets, who must steal to support the dope habit. Then there are the professional burglars who would rather steal than work at an honest job for a living. Burglars come in all sizes, shapes and colors. (page 19)

As with the door checker, he probably will ring the doorbell or knock to be sure there is no one in the house or apartment before trying to enter. (page 21)

Richard T. Wright & Scott Decker (1994) **BURGLARS ON THE JOB: Street Life and Residential Break-Ins: Street Life and Residential Break-Ins**. Northeastern University Press

This is probably the most comprehensive study done on residential burglary. As with the previous study, Wright and Decker provide the following useful insight and information:

*“In such circumstances residential burglary, which typically requires nothing more than readily available objects (e.g., screwdrivers, hammer, or small crowbar) for its commission, becomes correspondingly more attractive.” (Pg. 56)*

“Almost all of the offenders initially were attracted to residences which, judging from the outside, appeared to them to contain good stuff... The most obvious cue was the size of the structure. Other things being equal, a large house was regarded as promising the biggest payoff. Another cue was the condition of the property. Well-maintained dwellings were believed to contain the most desirable goods. Several of the offenders said they were attracted to residences specifically by BMW’s and Mercedes-Benzes rather than by expensive cars in general” (pg. 82-83)

“...most of the offenders wanted to steer clear of neighborhoods in which the residents appeared to be keeping an eye out for each other. They inferred whether this might be the case from a variety of factors including the general condition of the area and the age composition of its population. The offenders as poor areas from which to select targets viewed other things being equal, well-kept neighborhoods with a high proportion of elderly residents. The residents of such neighborhoods were presumed to be especially vigilant and prone to reporting suspicious-looking persons to the police.” (Pg. 92)

“After occupancy, the subjects generally regarded visibility as the next most important issue in assessing risk. They did not want to be observed while entering or leaving a residence and therefore were drawn to dwelling with access points that could not be seen easily from the street or from surrounding buildings.” (Pg. 97)

“In a related vein, the subjects also were concerned about the possibility of being heard while attempting to break into their intended targets. Accordingly, they would not choose residences that were situated too close to other dwellings.” (Pg. 97)

*“The prevailing sentiment was captured by a subject who pointed out, “As long as houses are made of wood and glass, I can get ‘em.” Ease of access was a primary consideration when burglars searched for prospective burglary sites. Door and window locks are often indistinguishable from a distance, so they do not play a prominent role in initial decisions on the ease of entering prospective targets. (Pg. 98)*

*“Nevertheless, some offenders said that they had confidence in their ability to defeat deadbolt locks. One, for example, claimed to have what he referred to as a “dead pull,” a device which enabled him to undo such locks. Others reported using some sort of “jimmy,” usually a crowbar or large screwdriver, to pry door from their frames, thereby rendering the locks useless.” (Pg. 122)*

*“Occasionally, the burglars were lucky enough to discover an unlocked window that was accessible and well screened from public view. More typically, they were unable to find an insecure window and had to choose between two alternative methods of entry. The first involved forcing or prying the window open.” As one burglar explains, “With some kinds of windows you can take a screwdriver and you can, uhm, right where the window’s set into the frame, you can bend the frame back and the window come unclosed.” (Pg. 123)*

Berube, Henri (2001) ***An Examination of Alarm System Deterrence and Rational Choice Theory: The Need To Increase Risk***

The decision to commit a crime is essentially the same as any other decision, undertaken with respect to consideration of two elements; the pain (risk) and gain (rewards) that will result from any given course of action. Risk and reward factors therefore are the foundations on which offending choices will be built upon and require further examination.

A growing body of evidence is indicating that burglary prevention can be achieved through the strategic application of target hardening measures developed under rational choice theory. Many of these measures are supported by scientific research and include information suggesting that alarm systems act as a deterrent. However, the application of alarm systems as a stand-alone deterrent measure is only supported by rational choice theory if the risk in apprehension is increased.

During the last decade, advances in technology have resulted in a significant change in the fundamental nature of burglary. Burglary is an increasingly profitable business, to which alarm systems no longer pose a significant risk of apprehension. Complicating matters further, practices are being implemented by the alarm industry, to reduce burden of false alarms on police services. This thesis will, through literature review, and data analysis, examine two seemingly separate issues, the changing nature of burglary and false alarm verification. These issues will be inextricably linked and contrary to rational choice theory shown to be reducing the risk of apprehension, resulting from alarm response.

Additionally, it will be shown that the alarm industry’s singular focus on alarm deterrence may be impairing the application of other effective situational security measures. The use of alarm systems as a stand-alone security strategy is therefore no longer supported by rational choice theory. However, when combined as part of an overall security strategy including effective false alarm verification technology, alarm systems can play a vital role in increasing the risk of apprehension.

O’Shea, Timothy C. (2000) “Efficacy of Home Security Measures” ***American Journal of Criminal Justice*** Vol:24, Issue: 2, Date: Spring 2000, (pages 155 – 167)



Homes were at significantly greater risk of victimization if: (1) the burglar saw signs that the neighborhood was not cohesive, (2) the burglar would not be confronted by the resident, (3) the home was not sufficiently secure or (4) the burglar would not be seen by a neighbor. Manipulation of either target or guardian aspects of the environment affected victimization in accordance with expectations.

Barnett, G.A.; Gillham, J.R. (1994) "Decaying Interest in Burglary Prevention, Residence on a Block With an Active Block Club and Communication Linkage: A Routine Activities Approach" ***Journal of Crime and Justice*** Volume: 17 Issue: 2 Dated: (1994) pages: 23-48

Because many burglary prevention programs find it difficult to keep participants actively involved, this study examined the problem... Data analysis showed that declining participant involvement in burglary prevention increased with the proportion of residents living on a block where there was an active block club and with the extent of neighborhood discussion about what was going on in the community. [The authors suggest that burglary prevention programs should encourage neighborhood residents to participate routinely in activities that stimulate continued interest in burglary prevention.](#)

Beedle, S. (1981) "Evaluation of the Home Security Program" ***National Institute of Justice/NCJRS paper reproduction***

The program was designed to reduce burglaries particularly among elderly homeowners. Its site-hardening activities involved installing double cylinder deadbolt locks, pinning windows, and placing wire screens on windows, as well as recommending lighting and landscaping improvements... reported forced-entry burglaries for 260 homes site-hardened during July-December 1978. A previous evaluation showed a decrease in the number of burglaries 1-12 months after site-hardening. These findings indicate that the site-hardening program is having a positive effect on decreasing the burglary rates for participating homes. Only three forced entry burglaries were reported in the survey period and the burglary rate was reduced 70 percent between the pre-site hardening period and the post-site hardening period. Most forcible entries resulted from the homeowner's failure to comply with recommended site hardening techniques.

Jackson, H. and Winchester, S. (1982) "Residential Burglary – The Limits of Prevention" ***Great Britain Home Office Research and Planning Unit***

Not only do poor surveillance and an empty house mean that burglars can approach without being seen but, because the burglars are unobserved, they may have sufficient opportunity to deal with security hardware which might otherwise have deterred them from entering. Thus, isolated homes may have greater security hardware requirements. Burglary prevention policies should adopt a broader perspective than simple target hardening; different approaches may be required for different types of housing and areas. Local police forces should carefully map the incidence of burglary in their area so that appropriate efforts can be directed toward burglary prone areas.

Beedle, S. (1983) "Evaluation of the Home Security Program – A 3 Year Follow Up Study" ***National Institute of Justice/NCJRS paper reproduction***

An analysis of reported forced-entry burglaries in Portland, OR indicated that a police-directed residential security program which focused on site hardening substantially decreased burglary rates for participating households during a 3 year follow up period...Of the 300 homes, only 13 forced entry burglaries were reported during the follow up period. Burglaries decreased by 62% in the 3 years. The 13 burglaries reported during the follow up period represented an annual rate of 1.4 burglaries per 100 households compared to a citywide rate of 3.0. Windows were the points of entry in seven burglaries and doors in the remaining 6 incidents. In most

cases, doors and windows were broken after site hardening materials had prevented an easier entry into the homes.

### **BURGLARY OF DOMESTIC DWELLINGS: Finding from the British Crime Survey**

**By Tracy Budd (1999)**

Nature of Burglary, 1998 British Crime Survey

- In just over a half (54%) of burglaries no one was at home at the time. In a quarter (25%) someone was at home and aware of what was happening.
- ***Two-thirds (67%) of burglaries involved some form of property damage, usually caused by the offender trying to gain entry to the home.***
- In almost two-thirds (63%) of burglaries with entry, and a half (48%) of attempts, victims said they would like some form of help or support immediately after the incident. Of these proportion who were offered or asked for help was 84% and 65% respectively.
- Evidence from the British Crime Survey suggest that even the most common security devices, deadlocks and window locks, greatly reduce the risk of being burgled. Those who additionally have burglar alarms, security lights or window grilles reduce their risks further.

### **OTHER STUDIES, PUBLICATIONS, OR LESS SPECIFIC INFORMATION ADDRESSING RESIDENTIAL BURGLARIES:**

#### **Locksmith Ledger (Feb. 1995) “Residential Burglary Patterns” By S. Hakim; M A Gaffney.**

Findings show that most burglaries occur in the suburbs within three blocks of arterial routes that lead from poor neighborhoods to the outskirts of the metropolis. The number of burglaries diminishes with distance from crime generating centers. Single family homes adjacent to central cities experience a high number of burglaries...Generally, burglars tend to choose residential streets that provide concealed operation. Although cul de sacs provide residents with privacy, they also afford burglars that same privacy, especially if backed by a wooded area or abandoned railroad tracks. A particular house on a street is targeted for burglary because it displays signs of wealth, is well concealed from the street and from neighbors, and takes few precautions against burglary. Larger homes on larger lots are primary targets for burglars. Newly occupied properties have the highest risk of burglary, since neighbors are unfamiliar with one another. Most residential burglaries occur during daytime hours when residents are absent from the home. Entry is usually through the first floor, particularly through a front or side door.

#### **Study on Post-Incident Maladjustments of Burglary Victims: Reports of the National Research Institute of Police Science; Volume: 36: Issue: 2 (Dec. 1995) by J Kobayashi; H. Saito** (*\*\*This one is extremely interesting! Especially how the police can help with fears of burglary and provided timely, accurate information\*\**)

This study examines what kinds of burglary victims are more likely to suffer from psychological maladjustments after the victimization and the kinds of incidents that are more likely to be related to the victims' psychological maladjustments... “Psychological distress” and “fear of re-victimization” were the measures of post-incident psychological maladjustments.

“Psychological distress” refers to comprehensive psychological problems commonly experienced by victims of crime and accidents...The study found that female victims were more likely to develop the symptoms of psychological distress and fear of re-victimization; and younger victims, particularly young females who lived alone, were more likely to suffer from fear of re-victimization. Those most likely to have experienced fear of re-victimization lived in condominium or apartment houses and did not have close relationships with neighbors.

***Victims who performed individual household protection behaviors such as keeping door and windows locked before the victimization were more likely to suffer from***

***psychological distress and fear of re-victimization. Victims who received information on crime prevention from the police were less likely to develop the symptoms of psychological distress and fear of re-victimization.*** Victims who experienced previous incidents of criminal victimization as well as those who saw or heard the burglars were more likely to suffer psychological distress and fear of re-victimization, and victims who lost large sums of money also suffered from psychological distress. Those who suffered significant property damage or who assumed they were victimized by professional burglars also suffered from psychological distress.

**Burglary Called Gateway Crime to Rape: Study Says Many Sex Offenders Start With Break-ins** By Amy Worden [APBNews.com](http://APBNews.com) (July 14, 2000)

At least 40% of convicted sex offenders start their criminal careers as burglars, according to an ongoing study of inmates in the Virginia prison system.

Forensic scientists examining 100 men who were matched to unsolved sex offenses through their DNA found 40% were apprehended because their genetic makeup was in the state database for burglaries and larceny. The other 60% had DNA on file from previous sex offenses such as rape or sodomy.

“We looked at early criminal histories and found burglaries where the (method) used looked similar, so we stockpiled them and looked at more and there seemed to be similarities,” said Jame Kouten, director of the Institute for Forensic Science and Medicine. “Those who started out as left-handed burglars, then pursue crimes of opportunity, are the same types engaging in more serious crimes later.”

Michael Betten, CPP  
Crime Prevention Unit  
327-6886

## Overland Park (KS) Single Family Dwelling Security Ordinance

### **16.110.328.1**

Subsection R328.1 of the International Residential Code and referenced appendices, which is part of the International Building Code adopted by Overland Park Code 16.100.100, is hereby added to read as follows:

**R328.1 Purpose.** The purpose of this Article is to establish minimum standards that incorporate physical security to make dwelling units resistant to unlawful entry. (Ord. BC-2143 §1, 1998)

### **16.110.328.1.1**

Subsection R328.1.1 of the International Residential Code and referenced appendices, which is part of the International Building Code adopted by Overland Park Code 16.04.300, is hereby added to read as follows:

**R328.1.1 Scope.** The provisions of this article shall apply to all new structures and to alterations, additions, and repairs as stipulated in Chapter 34 of the International Building Code. (Ord. BC-2143 §2, 1998)

### **16.110.328.2**

Subsection R328.2 of the International Residential and referenced appendices, which is part of the International Building Code adopted by Overland Park Code 16.100.100, is hereby added to read as follows:

**R328.2 Doors.** Except for vehicular access doors, all exterior swinging doors of residential buildings and attached garages, including the doors leading from the garage area into the dwelling unit, shall comply with Subsections R327.2.1 through R327.2.4 for the type of door installed. (Ord. BC-2143 §3, 1998)

### **16.110.328.2.1**

Subsection R328.2.1 of the International Residential Code and referenced appendices, which is part of the International Building Code adopted by Overland Park Code 16.04.300, is hereby added to read as follows:

**R328.2.1 Wood doors.** Where installed exterior wood doors shall be of solid core construction such as high-density particleboard, solid wood, or wood block core with a minimum thickness of one and three-fourths (1 3/4") inches at any point. Doors with panel inserts shall be solid wood. The panels shall be a minimum of 1 inch thick. The tapered portion of the panel that inserts into the groove of the door shall be a minimum

of ¼ inch thick. The groove shall be a dado groove or applied molding construction. The groove shall be a minimum of ½ inch in depth.  
(Ord. BC-2143 §4, 1998)

**16.110.328.2.2**

Subsection R328.2.2 of the International Residential Code and referenced appendices, which is part of the International Building Code adopted by Overland Park Code 16.100.100, is hereby added to read as follows:

**R328.2.2 Steel doors.** Where installed exterior steel doors shall be a minimum thickness of 24 gauge.  
(Ord. BC-2143 §5, 1998)

**16.110.328.2.3**

Subsection R328.2.3 of the International Residential Code and referenced appendices, which is part of the International Building Code adopted by Overland Park Code 16.100.100, is hereby added to read as follows:

**R328.2.3 Fiberglass doors.** Fiberglass doors shall have a minimum skin thickness of one-sixteenth (1/16") inch and have reinforcement material at the location of the deadbolt.  
(Ord. BC-2143 §6, 1998)

**16.110.328.2.4**

Subsection R328.2.4 of the International Residential Code and referenced appendices, which is part of the International Building Code adopted by Overland Park Code 16.100.100, is hereby added to read as follows:

**R328.2.4 Double doors.** Where installed the inactive leaf of an exterior double door shall be provided with flush bolts having an engagement of not less than one inch into the head and threshold of the doorframe. (Ord. BC-2143 §7, 1998)

**16.110.328.2.5**

Subsection R328.2.5 of the International Residential Code and referenced appendices, which is part of the International Building Code adopted by Overland Park Code 16.100.100, is hereby added to read as follows:

**R327.2.5 Sliding doors.** Where installed exterior sliding doors shall comply with all of the following requirements:

- (a) Sliding door assemblies shall be installed to prevent the removal of the panels and the glazing from the exterior with the installation of shims or screws in the upper track.
- (b) All sliding glass doors shall be equipped with a secondary locking device consisting of a metal pin or a surface mounted bolt assembly. Metal pins

shall be installed at the intersection of the inner and outer panels of the inside door and shall not penetrate the frame's exterior surface. The surface mounted bolt assembly shall be installed at the base of the door.

(Ord. BC-2143 §8, 1998)

### **16.110.328.3**

Subsection R328.3 of the International Residential Code and referenced appendices, which is part of the International Building Code adopted by Overland Park Code 16.100.100, is hereby added to read as follows:

**R327.3 Door frames.** The exterior doorframes shall be installed prior to a rough-in inspection. Doorframes shall comply with Subsections 328.3.1 through 328.3.4 for the type of assembly installed.

(Ord. BC-2143 §9, 1998)

### **16.110.328.3.1**

Subsection R328.3.1 of the International Residential Code and referenced appendices, which is part of the International Building Code adopted by Overland Park Code 16.100.100, is hereby added to read as follows:

**R328.3.1 Wood frames.** Wood doorframes shall comply with all of the following requirements:

- (a) All exterior doorframes shall be set in frame openings constructed of double studding or equivalent construction, including garage doors, but excluding overhead doors. Doorframes, including those with sidelights shall be reinforced in accordance with ASTM F476-84 Grade 40. (b) In wood framing, horizontal blocking shall be placed between studs at the door lock height for three (3) stud spaces or equivalent bracing on each side of the door opening.

(Ord. BC-2143 §10, 1998)

### **16.110.328.3.2**

Subsection R328.3.2 of the International Residential Code and referenced appendices, which is part of the International Building Code adopted by Overland Park Code 16.100.100, is hereby added to read as follows:

**327.3.2 Steel frames.** All exterior doorframes shall be constructed of 18 gauge or heavier steel, and reinforced at the hinges and strikes. All steel frames shall be anchored to the wall in accordance with manufacturer specifications. Supporting wall structures shall consist of double studding or framing of equivalent strength. Frames shall be installed to eliminate tolerances inside the rough opening.

(Ord. BC-2143 §11, 1998)

### **16.110.328.3.3**

Subsection R328.3.3 of the International Residential Code and referenced appendices, which is part of the International Building Code adopted by Overland Park Code 16.100.100, is hereby added to read as follows:

**R328.3.3 Door jambs.**

*(a) Doorjambs shall be installed with solid backing in a manner so no void exists between the strike side of the jamb and the frame opening for a vertical distance of twelve (12") inches each side of the strike. Filler material shall consist of a solid wood block.*

*(b) Door stops on wooden jambs for in-swinging doors shall be of one-piece construction. Jambs for all doors shall be constructed or protected so as to prevent violation of the strike.*

(Ord. BC-2143 §12, 1998)

**16.110.328.4**

Subsection R328.4 of the International Residential Code and referenced appendices, which is part of the International Building Code adopted by Overland Park Code 16.100.100, is hereby added to read as follows:

**R328.4 Door hardware.** Exterior door hardware shall comply with the Subsections 328.4.1 through 328.4.3.

(Ord. BC-2143 §13, 1998)

**16.110.328.4.1**

Subsection R328.4.1 of the International Residential Code and referenced appendices, which is part of the International Building Code adopted by Overland Park Code 16.100.100, is hereby added to read as follows:

**R328.4.1 Hinges.** Hinges for exterior swinging doors shall comply with the following:

- (a) At least two (2) screws, three (3 ") inches in length, penetrating at least one (1") inch into wall structure shall be used. Solid wood fillers or shims shall be used to eliminate any space between the wall structure and doorframe behind each hinge.
- (b) Hinges for out-swinging doors shall be equipped with mechanical interlock to preclude the removal of the door from the exterior.

(Ord. BC-2143 §14, 1998)

**16.110.328.4.2**

Subsection 328.4.2 of the International Residential Code and referenced appendices, which is part of the International Building Code adopted by Overland Park Code 16.100.100, is hereby added to read as follows:

**R328.4.2 Strike plates.** Exterior door strike plates shall be a minimum of 18 gauge metal with four offset screw holes. Strike plates shall be attached to wood with not less than three (3 ") inch screws, which shall have a minimum of one (1") inch penetration into the nearest stud. Note: For side lighted units, refer to Subsection 327.4.6. (Ord. BC-2143 §15, 1998)

**16.110.328.4.3**

Subsection R328.4.3 of the International Residential Code and referenced appendices, which is part of the International Building Code adopted by Overland Park Code 16.100.100, is hereby added to read as follows:

**R328.4.3 Escutcheon plates.** All exterior doors shall have escutcheon plates or wrap-around door channels installed around the lock protecting the door's edge. (Ord. BC-2143 §16, 1998)

**16.110.328.4.4**

Subsection R328.4.4 of the International Residential Code and referenced appendices, which is part of the International Building Code adopted by Overland Park Code 16.100.100, is hereby added to read as follows:

**R328.4.4 Locks.** Exterior doors shall be provided with a locking device complying with one of the following:

- (a) Single Cylinder Deadbolt shall have a minimum projection of one (1") inch. The deadbolt shall penetrate at least three-fourths (3/4") inch into the strike receiving the projected bolt. The cylinder shall have a twist-resistant, tapered hardened steel cylinder guard. The cylinder shall have a minimum of five (5) pin tumblers, shall be connected to the inner portion of the lock by solid metal connecting screws at least one-fourth (1/4") inch in diameter and two and one-fourth (2-1/4") in length.. Bolt assembly (bolt housing) unit shall be of single piece construction. All deadbolts shall meet ANSI grade 2 specifications.

(b)

(Ord. BC-2143 §17, 1998)

**16.110.328.4.5**

Subsection R328.4.5 of the International Residential Code and referenced appendices, which is part of the International Building Code adopted by Overland Park Code 16.100.100, is hereby added to read as follows:

**R328.4.5 Entry vision and glazing.** All main or front entry doors to dwelling units shall be arranged so that the occupant has a view of the area immediately outside the door without opening the door. The view may be provided by a door viewer having a field of view of not less than 180 degrees through windows or through view ports.



(Ord. BC-2143 §18, 1998)

**16.110.328.4.6**

Subsection R328.4.6 of the International Residential Code and referenced appendices, which is part of the International Building Code adopted by Overland Park Code 16.100.100, is hereby added to read as follows:

**R328.4.6 Side lighted entry doors.** Side light door units shall have framing of double stud construction or equivalent construction complying with Subsections 327.3.1, 327.3.2 and 327.3.3. The doorframe that separates the door opening from the sidelight, whether on the latch side or the hinge side, shall be double stud construction or equivalent construction complying with Subsections 327.3.1 and 327.3.2. Double stud construction or construction of equivalent strength shall exist between the glazing unit of the side light and wall structure of the dwelling.

(Ord. BC-2143 §19, 1998)

**16.110.328.5**

Subsection R328.5 of the International Residential Code and referenced appendices, which is part of the International Building Code adopted by Overland Park Code 16.100.100, is hereby added to read as follows:

**328.5 Street numbers.** Street numbers shall comply with Section 325.1.

**16.110.328.6.1**

Subsection R328.6.1 of the International Residential Code and referenced appendices, which is part of the International Building Code adopted by Overland Park Code 16.100.100, is hereby added to read as follows:

**R328.6.1 Front and street-side exterior lighting.** All front and street side door entrances should be protected with a minimum of one light outlet having a minimum of sixty (60) watts of lighting (or energy efficient equivalent), installed so that the light source is not readily accessible.

(Ord. BC-2143 §21, 1998)

**16.110.328.6.2**

Subsection R325.6.2 of the International Residential Code and referenced appendices, which is part of the International Building Code adopted by Overland Park Code 16.100.100, is hereby added to read as follows:

**R328.6.2 Rear exterior lighting.** Homes with windows or doors near ground level below eight (8') feet on the rear side of the house shall be equipped with a minimum of one light outlet having 100 watt lighting (or energy efficient equivalent) and shall be of the flood light type. Those fixtures placed below eight (8') feet shall be fixtures manufactured such that the light source is not readily accessible.

(Ord. BC-2143 §22, 1998)

**16.110.328.8**

Subsection R328.8 of the International Residential Code and referenced appendices, which is part of the International Building Code adopted by Overland Park Code 16.100.100, is hereby added to read as follows:

**R328.8 Alternate materials and methods of construction.** The provisions of this chapter are not intended to prevent the use of any material or method of construction not specifically prescribed by this chapter, provided any such alternate has been approved by the enforcing authority, nor is it the intention of this chapter to exclude any sound method of structural design or analysis not specifically provided for in this chapter. The materials, methods of construction, and structural design limitations provided for in this chapter shall be used, unless the enforcing authority grants an exception.

The enforcing authority may approve any such alternate provided they find the proposed design, materials, and methods of work to be at least equivalent to those prescribed in this chapter in quality, strength, effectiveness, burglary resistance, durability, and safety.



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12400 Foster  
Overland Park, Kansas 66213  
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Asset Protection Unit  
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Mike.Betten@opkansas.org

November 1, 2004

**Attachment #3: Hold Up and Panic Alarm Memo to ASIS**

Phillip Banks, CPP  
The Banks Group  
Security Management Solutions  
1439 South Indiana Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60605

**RE: Silent/Hold Up Alarms and “Best Practices”**

Dear Mr. Banks,

The following is a summary of my research pertaining to the usefulness and “best practices” pertaining for the application of hold-up/silent alarms.

### **Conclusion**

The application of a silent/hold-up alarm should truly be questioned for its overall contribution to the security strategy employed at a business or facility. It appears the primary strategy for most silent/hold-up alarms is to aid in the detection and apprehension of robbery suspects. However, some law enforcement agencies and security practitioners suggests to minimize the risk of injury or violence, activation of such devices should occur “after” the suspect(s) leave the premise. The Los Angeles Police Department suggests in their robbery prevention guide “If you have a silent alarm and can reach it without being noticed, use it. Otherwise, wait until the robber leaves.” The unsettling term used by the LAPD is “if.” It would appear that much of the research suggest that the silent/hold-up alarm poses a risk to the victims and provides a “delayed” response by the police.

Although the LAPD makes reference to silent alarms, many other security practitioners or law enforcement agencies do not. Lawrence Fennelly in his book The Handbook of Loss Prevention and Crime Prevention, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition makes no reference to the use of a silent/hold-up alarm for a robbery prevention program. The City of Gainesville, FL financed a study of late night retail robberies following an escalation of such incidents. Following the analysis of the data, several prevention methods were recommended and later incorporated into a city ordinance. No where in the prevention strategies did the study recommend the installation of a silent/hold-up alarm. Authors Curt and Anne Bartol in their book Criminal Behavior: A Psychosocial Approach specifically address the silent alarm, “Cameras and silent alarms do not seem to reduce convenience store robberies, but some preliminary evidence suggests that the installation of interactive CCTV (allowing communication between store personnel and security personnel

watching a monitor in a remote location) may be effective in reducing store robberies by nearly one-third (Eck, 2000).” **The common recommendations by both security practitioners and law enforcement officials suggest: better lighting, cooperate with suspects, cash controls, clear site lines, and employees working in pairs or more.**

The most significant problem for the silent/hold-up alarm is the number of nuisance alarms it generates. Interviews with many law enforcement officers indicated they anticipate such an alarm will yet be another false activation. Most law enforcement agencies respond to the silent/hold-up alarm while obeying all traffic laws, resulting in a delayed response. Yet, the possibility of law enforcement responding quickly may possibly generate a hostage situation. This was evident in Olathe, KS on December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1999. The Olathe Police Department in preparation of the turn of the century had significantly increased the number of officers on the street. Just as a bank was preparing to close for the holiday, two individuals entered the bank with the intent to commit a robbery. The alarm was activated and officers responded immediately. What ensued was a hostage standoff that lasted for nearly eight hours. The incident ended with the suspects surrendering, but the potential for violence and injuries was significant.

### **Problems with the Silent/Hold-Up Alarm**

In theory the silent/hold-up alarm should pose a significant risk to the perpetrators, but as Henri Berube points out *“Allowing the robbers to know of the existence of the silent alarm sort of defeats its purpose and allows the robbers to plan for controlling it.”* Given that, then does the silent/hold-up alarm pose a risk to the perpetrator or victim? Even the LAPD recognizes the potential hazard of activating the alarm in the presence of the perpetrators, **“If you have a silent alarm and can reach it without being noticed, us it. Otherwise, wait until the robber leaves.”**

The biggest problem with the silent/hold-up is the false alarm. The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) indicates that over 90% of all alarm activations are false. This has caused many law enforcement agencies to require alarm activations to be routed through a central station before calling the police. This causes a delay in the notification to the law enforcement officer on the street as noted in Security Management Magazine (February 2001). Brian Abraham and Peter Baldassaro wrote in their article titled Leaving Robbers Barren about one company’s revision to their bank robbery prevention initiative, *“The company chose to remove all the panic alarms from the branches. In review of the branches that had not yet been converted to the new program, security found that staff would push the panic button, which went to a monitoring center, rather than phoning the police as they were instructed. That caused a problem because, under Canadian law, monitoring companies must call the bank and confirm the robbery before dispatching the police. This resulted in significant delays in some cases. By removing the alarms, staff are now forced to call 911. The new program has both improved police response times and reduced false alarms.”*

I teach the false alarm prevention class for my city which has adopted recommendations by the alarm industry to fine alarm users. Our fine schedule increases with each false alarm to which an officer responds. Some businesses have experienced so many false alarms that it is not uncommon for the fines in one year to exceed the average loss per robbery incident. The very device intended to save money and keep people safe appears it does neither. When examining

the risk through crime analysis data, it is obvious for some clients the silent/hold up alarm could be a costly endeavor.

## **Robbery Facts**

### **Segments from Violence on the Job: Identifying Risks and Developing Solutions**

Without a doubt robbery can be a violent and dangerous crime. *“Contrary to popular opinion, the predominant motive in workplace homicides was neither anger nor passion – as may appear from well publicized events – but robbery.”* (pg. 8)

Older workers (65 years and over) had the highest homicide victimization rate—more than twice that for workers in the 55-64 age group. (pg. 7)

Simple assaults, which comprised over two thirds of workplace violent crimes, resulted in injuries to one out of every seven victims; aggravated assaults resulted in injuries to one out of every five victims; **and robberies resulted in injuries to one out of every four victims**. All in all, slightly fewer than 160,000 victims suffered injuries (aside from rape), and 10% of these required medical care. It appears that more than half of all victimizations were not reported to the police. Of those not reporting, 40% considered the incident minor or a private matter and 27% said they had reported the incident to another official, such as a company security guard. (pg. 12)

**The FBI’s Uniformed Crime Reports (2002)** indicates that the use of a firearm in a robbery is relatively low at 42% and injuries occurred in less than 39% of the incidents.

*“Firearms continued to be the weapon used most often in the commission of robberies. In 2002, offenders used firearms in 42.1 percent of the robberies reported to the UCR program. Another 39.9 percent of robberies involved strong-arm tactics—hands, fists, feet, etc. Offenders used knives or cutting instruments in 8.7 percent of the offenses and other weapons in 9.3 percent of robberies.”*

#### ***Dollars Loss***

*“Nationwide, the average monetary value of property stolen during a robbery was \$1,281. Banks lost an average of \$4,763 for each robbery, and commercial houses (including supermarkets, department stores, restaurants, taverns, finance companies, hotels, motels, etc.) lost an average of \$1,676 per robbery offense...Additionally, losses from gas or service stations and convenience stores averaged \$679 and \$665, respectively, per robbery.”*

#### ***Clearances***

*“In 2002, law enforcement agencies cleared by arrest or exceptional means 25.7% of robberies reported to the national programs...Law enforcement in suburban and rural counties cleared 29.5 percent and 41.4 percent, respectively, of reported robberies”*

*“A 5 year comparison of robbery arrests for the Nation showed an overall 8.3 percent decline.”*

*“The majority of the arrestees, 89.7%, were males. By race, 54.1% of persons arrested for robbery were black, 44.1% percent were white, and 1.7% were of other races.”*

## Summary of Gainesville Convenience Store Intervention Strategy (1985)

(Most of the information was taken directly from the research paper)

In the spring of 1985, a barrage of convenience store robberies in Gainesville led to an exhaustive analysis of the problem by police personnel. The intent of the study was to discover whether any other locations throughout the country had successfully combated or prevented convenience store robbery and to isolate those factors which make the convenience store an attractive location for robbery. The data revealed the following:

- 92% of all the robberies occurred when only one clerk was present in the store. The statistic was not particularly significant since very few stores employed more than one clerk during the 1981-1986 period. Instead, the attention-getting factor here was the number of situations in which the robber had waited for the store to “clear out” – presenting a single victim upon which to prey.
- 85% of the robberies occurred when no customers were present at the inception of the crime and there was not a second clerk in the store. The scenario which developed repeatedly within the data analysis was that a perspective robber would enter the store and browse up and down the aisles until any present customers would leave before attempting the robbery.
- 91% of the incidents, the victim encountered a visible weapon or a threat of a weapon. In an additional 5% of the incidents, the victim was physically assaulted with fists by the perpetrator. In 3% of the situations, verbal threats were involved.
- Prior the research sponsored by Gainesville, researchers from the Southland Corporation argued that the presence of two clerks in late night retail was not a deterrent, but possibly escalated the chances of violence. The researchers (Crow and Erickson) sponsored by Gainesville interviewed 241 inmates in the states of Texas, California, Illinois, Louisiana, and New Jersey State prison systems. These inmates were all convicted of robbery offenses and information was obtained from the robbers as to their preferences for target characteristics. Only 22% of the sample population had committed convenience store robbery. The inmates were presented with eleven factors that supposedly influenced their thinking with regard to committing a robbery. These factors included:
  - The amount of money
  - The escape route
  - Anonymity
  - Likelihood of interference
  - Active police patrols
  - Armed clerk
  - The number of clerks in the store
  - The number of customers in the store
  - Camera system in the store and video recording equipment
  - Alarm system in the store

After the initial research had been conducted by Crow and Erickson, some in the police department felt the information was representative of what they knew about robberies. Following another in depth analysis, the following was developed. More interviews with robbery perpetrators were conducted and the desirable characteristics of stores are listed in progressive order with the most desirable characteristic being easy access/getaway.

- Only one clerk on duty
- No other business nearby

- Accessible safe
- Only one car in front
- One counter
- Remote area and poor visibility
- Female clerk dimly lighted outside
- Obstructed windows
- Gas station

When ranking the undesirable characteristics, the robbers identified the following:

1. robber knows clerk
2. store is near robber's residence
3. lots of customers near
4. cameras in the store
5. Time release safe
6. In the middle of other businesses
7. Heavy traffic
8. Two male clerks
9. Raised counter
10. Two or more cars in front
11. Deep register counter

The analysis concluded that a robber does not want to the possibility of interference – therefore, looks for only one clerk, no other businesses nearby, one car in front, and remote area stores – and wishes to remain anonymous, which is the reason for noting the undesirable characteristics of not wanting to know clerk and not having store near the robber's residence. In the final analysis the following was noted:

1. If the store had any shift with only one clerk on duty, it had a higher propensity for being robbed.
2. If a store limited its time of operation, it had a lower propensity for being robbed.
3. If a store exhibited visible cameras, it had a lower propensity for being robbed.
4. If there were 24-hour stores nearby, there were less occurrences of robbery
5. If the store exhibited a time-release safe, there were less occurrences of robbery.

**Based on the findings, the following prevention methods were recommended and later passed into law:**

- **Two employees working and on site**
- **Removal of signs posted in windows to provide a clear and unobstructed view of the cash register and sales area**
- **Locate sales area so that the clerk and customer are fully visible from the street**
- **Post a conspicuous sign in the window which states:**
  - **The cash register has \$50 or less,**
  - **Employee has access to 50% or less available to the employee at all times, and**
  - **A drop safe time-release safe is maintained in the store and it is (either) bolted to the floor, installed in the floor, or weighs a minimum of 500 pounds;**
- **Parking lots are to be lit at an intensity of 2-foot candles per square foot, with a uniformity ratio of no more than 5 to 1;**
- **Install security camera of a type and number approved by the City Manager; and**



- **Provide mandatory robbery prevention training to all employees who work between the hours of 8 PM and 4 AM.**

**Schmallegger, Frank (2004) Criminology Today: An Integrative Introduction. Pearson Prentice Hall. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey**

“Robberies that occur in commercial settings, such as convenience stores, gas stations, and banks, are termed institutional robbery. Several research studies have found that institutional robberies may be prevented through environmental and policy changes. As Scott A Hendricks and his colleagues found in a study of convenience store robberies, “The robber chooses a target based on various situational crime prevention factors.” These factors include staffing, hours of operation, cash-handling policy, and characteristics of the surrounding neighborhood. For example, the researchers found that “the odds of convenience store robbery were twice as high for older neighborhoods than newer neighborhoods.” Many of the precautions that lower the risk of robbery are costly, however, and not all businesses can afford them. A Richard T. Wright and Scott H. Decker note, “this puts businesses located in high-crime neighborhoods in a no-win situation because their clientele frequently are too poor to bear increased prices to support crime prevention measures.” Additionally, if the business fails as a result of robberies, the community loses again because the exodus of businesses that are forced to relocate makes the community less viable. Most of the robbers interviewed by Wright and Decker in their ethnographic study of robbers who selected commercial targets generally selected liquor stores, taverns and pawnshops because of the large amount of cash available. They also targeted businesses with low levels of customer activity because they viewed customers as an unpredictable risk factor. The robbers interviewed as part of the Floyd Feeney’s research in California during the 1970’s reported very little planning overall, but those who engaged in commercial robbery were much more likely to report planning than those who engaged in personal robberies (60% compared with 30%).” (pg 309-310)

**Bartol, Curt R., Bartol, Anne M. (2004) Criminal Behavior: A Psychosocial Approach 7<sup>th</sup> Edition. Pearson Prentice Hall Publishing**

Robbery accounts for only about 4% of all arrests for economic crimes (but 35% of the violent crimes). However, because of its potential physical harm to victims, it is among the crimes most feared by the American population (Garofalo, 1977). It involves a high probability of physical harm from a stranger, and it can happen to anyone. (Nearly half of robberies occur on streets and highways; One in 3 victims are injured in robberies (also called stickups, holdups, muggings), and 1 in 10 seriously enough to require medical attention (U.S. Department of Justice, 1988). Furthermore, robbery offenders are more likely to use weapons than other violent offenders. Yet, despite its dangerousness, robbery is among the least-studied criminal offenses.

One reason for the lack of research interest in the psychology of robbery is that robbery seems so obvious and straightforward: People rob to obtain money. The process is quick, and the potential returns are lucrative. Compared to burglary, however, the risks are great and the penalties substantial. (pg. 447-448)

...Bank Crime Statistics, the percentage of bank robberies that involve the use of a firearm is 32, and the actual shooting of a firearm occurs in about 2% of that total (FBI, 2003). Most (80%) bank robberies are carried out by a single offender. The vast majority of all bank robbers are male (95%) and most are between 18 and 29 years of age. (pg. 448)

Strong-arm robbery (without a weapon) is more likely to result in injury to the victim than is robbery with a firearm or knife. Presumably, victims are less fearful (and thus more daring) when confronted by a unarmed individual. In the absence of a gun or other weapon, the victim's resistance to losing valuable personal property is stronger, and he or she is more apt to hamper the progress of the strong-arm offender. The tendency to resist, therefore, may partly account for the higher rates of victims injury in these no-weapon situations. Furthermore, the offender is likely to feel more confident, powerful, and in control of the incident when he or she has a weapon. Because of this increase in confidence, the offender is less likely to be anxious and disorganized in response patterns and, thus, is better able to think clearly and evaluate the consequences of actions. (pg. 450)

Convenience stores appear to be favorite commercial sites for robbery, with an estimated 16,000 to 20,000 robbed per year in the United States. Most convenience stores have no robberies but a few have many robberies (Eck, 2000). One of the debates concerning prevention of convenience store robbery is whether having two or more clerks in the store, rather than one, reduces the robbery attempts. So far, the evidence is unclear, but the two-clerk experiment does not appear to discourage robberies as much as anticipated (Eck, 2000). **Cameras and silent alarms do not seem to reduce convenience store robberies, but some preliminary evidence suggests that the installation of interactive CCTV (allowing communication between store personnel and security personnel watching a monitor in a remote location) may be effective in reducing store robberies by nearly one-third (Eck, 2000).** (pg. 452)

-----Original Message-----

From: Henri Berube [mailto:[h.berube@sympatico.ca](mailto:h.berube@sympatico.ca)]  
Sent: Tuesday, October 12, 2004 10:50 PM  
To: William A. Alford, CFE  
Cc: Phillip Banks; Betten, Mike  
Subject: Armed Robbery Silent Alarms

Personally I don't like the alarm to be activated until after the robbery to avoid the police arriving while the robbers are still in the premise and provoke a hostage taking!

This is what we preached when I worked for Peel Police and I am not aware of any other police services that preach the contrary.

I wrote my Master's Thesis on the alarm industry and did not deal with nor do I recall seeing anything on robbery related silent alarms.

Arguably, from a prevention standpoint the alarm could pose a deterrent effect if it increased the risk of apprehension however for that to happen the robbers would need to be aware the silent alarm exists in the first place and believe that it increased the risk of apprehension beyond that of other suitable targets. Allowing the robbers to know of the existence of the silent alarm sort of defeats its purpose and allows the robbers to plan for controlling it.

I have a book on robbery studies in England that may deal with this issue. It is at my University office and I will check it out later in the week.

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## **Referenced Material**

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12400 Foster  
Overland Park, Kansas 66213  
www.opkansas.org

November 1, 2004

Phillip Banks, CPP  
The Banks Group  
Security Management Solutions  
1439 South Indiana Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60605

**RE: Silent/Hold Up Alarms and “Best Practices”**

Dear Mr. Banks,

The following is a summary of my research pertaining to the usefulness and “best practices” pertaining for the application of hold-up/silent alarms.

### **Conclusion**

The application of a silent/hold-up alarm should truly be questioned for its overall contribution to the security strategy employed at a business or facility. It appears the primary strategy for most silent/hold-up alarms is to aid in the detection and apprehension of robbery suspects. However, some law enforcement agencies and security practitioners suggests to minimize the risk of injury or violence, activation of such devices should occur “after” the suspect(s) leave the premise. The Los Angeles Police Department suggests in their robbery prevention guide “If you have a silent alarm and can reach it without being noticed, use it. Otherwise, wait until the robber leaves.” The unsettling term used by the LAPD is “if.” It would appear that much of the research suggest that the silent/hold-up alarm poses a risk to the victims and provides a “delayed” response by the police.

Although the LAPD makes reference to silent alarms, many other security practitioners or law enforcement agencies do not. Lawrence Fennelly in his book The Handbook of Loss Prevention and Crime Prevention, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition makes no reference to the use of a silent/hold-up alarm for robbery prevention program. The City of Gainesville, FL financed a study of late night retail robberies following an escalation of such incidents. Following the analysis of the data, several prevention methods were recommended and later incorporated into a city ordinance. No where in the prevention strategies did the study recommend the installation of a silent/hold-up alarm. **The common recommendations by both security practitioners and law enforcement suggest: better lighting, cooperate with suspects, cash controls, clear site lines, and employees working in pairs or more.**

The most significant problem for the silent/hold-up alarm is the number of nuisance alarms generated. Interviews with many law enforcement officers indicated they anticipate such an alarm will yet be another false activation. Most law enforcement agencies respond to the

silent/hold-up alarm obeying all traffic laws, resulting in a delayed response. Yet, the possibility of law enforcement responding quickly may possibly generate a hostage situation. This was evident in Olathe, KS on December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1999. The Olathe Police Department in preparation of the turn of the century had significantly increased the number of officers on the street. Just as a bank was preparing to close for the holiday, two individuals entered the bank with the intent to commit a robbery. The alarm was activated and officers responded immediately. What ensued was a hostage standoff that lasted for nearly eight hours. The incident ended with the suspects surrendering, but the potential for violence and injuries was significant.

### **Problems with the Silent/Hold-Up Alarm**

In theory the silent/hold-up alarm should pose a significant risk to the perpetrators, but as Henri Berube points out *“Allowing the robbers to know of the existence of the silent alarm sort of defeats its purpose and allows the robbers to plan for controlling it.”* Given that, then does the silent/hold-up alarm pose a risk to the perpetrator or victim? Even the LAPD recognizes the potential hazard activating the alarm in the presence of the perpetrators, **“If** you have a silent alarm and can reach it without being noticed, use it. Otherwise, wait until the robber leaves.”

The biggest problem with the silent/hold-up is the false alarm. The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) indicates that over 90% of all alarm activations are false. This has caused many law enforcement agencies to require the alarm activation to be routed through a central station before calling the police. This caused a delay to the notification to the law enforcement officer on the street as noted in Security Management Magazine (February 2001). Brian Abraham and Peter Baldassaro wrote in their article titled Leaving Robbers Barren about one company’s revision to their bank robbery prevention initiative, *“The company chose to remove all the panic alarms from the branches. In review of the branches that had not yet been converted to the new program, security found that staff would push the panic button, which went to a monitoring center, rather than phoning the police as they were instructed. That caused a problem because, under Canadian law, monitoring companies must call the bank and confirm the robbery before dispatching the police. This resulted in significant delays in some cases. By removing the alarms, staff are now forced to call 911. The new program has both improved police response times and reduced false alarms.”*

I teach the false alarm prevention class for my city which has adopted recommendations by the alarm industry to fine alarm users. Our fine schedule increases with each false alarm occurrence that an officer responds to. Some businesses have experienced so many false alarms that it is not uncommon for the fines in one year to exceed the average loss per robbery incident. The very device intended to save money and keep people safe appears it does neither. When examining the risk through crime analysis data, it is obvious for some clients the silent/hold up alarm could be a costly endeavor.

## **Robbery Facts**

### **Segments from Violence on the Job: Identifying Risks and Developing Solutions**

Without a doubt robbery can be a violent and dangerous crime. *“Contrary to popular opinion, the predominant motive in workplace homicides was neither anger nor passion – as may appear from well publicized events – but robbery.”* (pg. 8)

Older workers (65 years and over) had the highest homicide victimization rate-more than twice that for workers in the 55-64 age group. (pg. 7)

Simple assaults, which comprised over two thirds of workplace violent crimes, resulted in injuries to one out of every seven victims; aggravated assaults resulted in injuries to one out of every five victims; **and robberies resulted in injuries to one out of every four victims**. All in all, slightly fewer than 160,000 victims suffered injuries (aside from rape), and 10% of these required medical care. It appears that more than half of all victimizations were not reported to the police. Of those not reporting, 40% considered the incident minor or a private matter and 27% said they had reported the incident to another official, such as a company security guard. (pg. 12)

**The FBI’s Uniformed Crime Reports (2002)** indicates that the use of a firearm in a robbery is relatively low at 42% and injuries occurred in less than 39% of the incidents.

*“Firearms continued to be the weapon used most often in the commission of robberies. In 2002, offenders used firearms in 42.1 percent of the robberies reported to the UCR program. Another 39.9 percent of robberies involved strong-arm tactics-hands, fists, feet, etc. Offenders used knives or cutting instruments in 8.7 percent of the offenses and other weapons in 9.3 percent of robberies.*

#### ***Dollars Loss***

*“Nationwide, the average monetary value of property stolen during a robbery was \$1,281. Banks lost an average of \$4,763 for each robbery, and commercial houses (including supermarkets, department stores, restaurants, taverns, finance companies, hotels, motels, etc.) lost an average of \$1,676 per robbery offense...Additionally, losses from gas or service stations and convenience stores averaged \$679 and \$665, respectively, per robbery.*

#### ***Clearances***

*“In 2002, law enforcement agencies cleared by arrest or exceptional means 25.7% of robberies reported to the national programs...Law enforcement in suburban and rural counties cleared 29.5 percent and 41.4 percent, respectively, of reported robberies”*

*“A 5 year comparison of robbery arrests for the Nation showed an overall 8.3 percent decline.”*  
*“The majority of the arrestees, 89.7%, were males. By race, 54.1% of persons arrested for robbery were black, 44.1% percent were white, and 1.7% were of other races.”*

### **Summary of Gainesville Convenience Store Intervention Strategy (1985)**

(Most of the information was taken directly from the research paper)

In the spring of 1985, a barrage of convenience store robberies in Gainesville led to an exhaustive analysis of the problem by police personnel. The intent of the study was to discover whether any other locations throughout the country had successfully combated or prevented convenience store robbery and to isolate those factors which make the convenience store an attractive location for robbery. The data revealed the following:

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- Obstructed windows
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When ranking the undesirable characteristics, the robbers identified the following:

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The analysis concluded that a robber does not want to the possibility of interference – therefore, looks for only one clerk, no other businesses nearby, one car in front, and remote area stores – and wishes to remain anonymous, which is the reason for noting the undesirable characteristics of not wanting to know clerk and not having store near the robber's residence. In the final analysis the following was noted:

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Page 7

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## Crime Prevention Fact Sheet

# “Open Garage Doors”

## Reducing Criminal Opportunity

May 2003



pg. 1



### HELP CLOSE THE DOOR ON CRIME IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Most homeowners perceive burglars breaking a window or forcing a door open to gain access into a home. Not so, nearly half of all residential burglaries in the city occur through an unlocked door or window. But the quickest and simplest means for most burglars to gain entry has been an open garage door.

In recent years, Overland Park has experienced numerous residential burglaries as the result of open or unsecured homes. But simply leaving a garage door open can lead to more serious crimes as evidence in Salt Lake City, UT, “Elizabeth Smart’s father admitted today he left the garage door to the family home open for hours before the 14-year-old was taken from her bedroom... (ABCNews.com June 17, 2002)”



### AN OPEN INVITATION TO CRIME...

#### EXCERPTS FROM ACTUAL POLICE REPORTS:

*“...The victim’s daughter had been asleep on the sofa in the family room and was awakened by an unknown person who entered through an open garage door and unlocked door leading into the kitchen.”* **Items stolen from the incident: wrapped presents and an automobile.**

*“For the second time in a month, this residence was entered through an unlocked door.”*

**Stolen from the residence: gold necklace, bracelet, cash, CD player and CD’s.**

#### **CLOSING THE DOOR WORKS!**

*“Victim advised she heard what she thought was key being tried in the front door lock. She approached the door and observed the handle turning. The deadbolt was locked, so no entry was made.”*

#### **THE ACCIDENTAL OPEN DOOR**

We all have done it, gone inside after working in the yard or retired to bed and left the garage door open. “Open garage door” indicators (shown below) are available and can be for affixed to your door immediately. When a garage door is left open, a warning light will indicate “open door.”





## Crime Prevention Fact Sheet

# “Open Garage Doors”

## Reducing Criminal Opportunity

May 2003



pg. 2

### “HOW OFTEN DOES IT OCCUR?”

In recent months, numerous burglaries have been reported where homes were unlocked or the garage door was left open. History shows us this number will increase significantly. In recent years, during an eleven-week period, 116 residential burglaries were reported. Half involved an unlocked or open door as the means of entry. The following year, over the same time period, 108 burglaries were recorded. Once again, open or unlocked doors were the primary point of entry. Learn from history or we will repeat it! Help the Overland Park Police Department by being diligent in notifying neighbors their doors are open. An open door is an open invitation to crime!

### PREVENTION TIPS

- 1. Secure all accessible entry points:** Simply securing your home significantly reduces your chances of being victimized. As mentioned previously, nearly half of all the residential burglaries occur through an open or unlocked door or window.
- 2. Create the “illusion of occupancy:”** Research clearly indicates the single greatest deterrent is an occupied house! Anyone at home, even children, should “acknowledge” anyone who knocks or rings the doorbell. Opening a door and “acknowledging” someone at the door are two different things. **DO NOT OPEN** the door to a stranger! Announce yourself through a closed door and indicate *“this is not a good time for visitors.”*
- 3. Burglars work close to home:** Most burglars operate within a comfort zone, either close to home or work. If a burglar lives near you, an open

garage door is an “open invitation” to your house.

- 4. Physical Security:** Half of all residential burglaries occur through an unlocked or open door, the other half result in some kind of force to gain access. Contact Officer Michael Betten and schedule a residential security survey to identify your home’s vulnerable entry points. As shown below, properly installed quality hardware can aid in the prevention of burglaries.



The above door was heavily damaged in a burglar’s attempt to gain access to the home. This home had installed quality security - hardware and reinforced the doorframe. No entry was made through the door.

**Contact the Police Department:** Schedule a residential security survey to determine how to best address your physical security needs. The survey will focus on your concerns and your home’s vulnerabilities. Contact Officer Michael Betten, CPP at (913)327-6886 or email: [mdbetten@opkansas.org](mailto:mdbetten@opkansas.org)

Contact us or for more information:  
 Email: [police@opkansas.org](mailto:police@opkansas.org)  
 For more information about crime prevention tips, go to our web page at:  
[www.opkansas.org](http://www.opkansas.org)  
 Phone number: (913)895-6000

# Residential Security



***“Helping Residents Reduce  
Criminal Opportunity”***

**Overland Park Police Department**



Dear Citizens:

Crime results when there is criminal desire and the opportunity for a criminal to act. There is little a police department can do to reduce an individual's desire to commit a crime other than incarcerate them. The police department can; however, help reduce the opportunities for criminals by working with citizens to develop comprehensive security strategies for residences and businesses. When you implement the information presented in this booklet, you develop a more effective barrier to protect you and your property from the criminal element.

Many police officers have learned through experience, that the majority of crimes involve unskilled or amateurish criminals. These criminals often select their victims based on the opportunities created by the victims themselves.

I urge all the citizens of Overland Park to implement the strategies identified in this booklet. Working together we can make our city a safer place to live.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John M. Douglass".

John M. Douglass  
Chief of Police



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Securing The Home.....	1
The Door And Door Frame.....	1-2
Deadbolt.....	2
Patio Doors (Sliding Glass Doors).....	2-3
Windows.....	3
Lighting.....	3
Dogs.....	3-4
Deterrence of Occupancy.....	4
Children Home Alone.....	4
Threat and Risk Assessment.....	4
Citizens For Crime Prevention.....	5
Operation Identification.....	5
Alarms.....	5



## Crime Prevention

# Residential Security

## Reducing Criminal Opportunity

March 2005



The length of time a burglar spends attempting to get into your home is proportional to the probability of detection. The chance of being seen and possibly identified is the burglar's biggest fear. Most burglars allow themselves one to two minutes to get into a home. Beyond that, the risk of detection becomes too great. A good security strategy slows burglars and extends them past their self-imposed time limits.

The fear of crime and its associated victimization is so pervasive in our society, people sometimes take extreme steps to prevent becoming a victim. In fact, the alarm industry has grown significantly due to this fear among residents. For an alarm system to be truly effective, a homeowner must first address the physical security of their home. When considering home security, a homeowner needs to "invest" in quality security hardware and ensure it is properly installed. Unfortunately, homeowners cannot always assume a new home contains quality security hardware. The cost of a new home is no indication of the level of security installed. In his book, Effective Physical Security, Robert L. O'Block writes:

"Even though door and window security are effective and simple methods of increasing the security of a structure, builders continue to use low-quality, low-security hardware and materials."

Thus, home buyers desiring security are often at a disadvantage before they even move into their home. While structural weaknesses may be expensive to repair, home security can be substantially increased by implementation of a few simple and inexpensive, yet effective prevention techniques. An exterior door is only as strong as its weakest component. A high quality lock installed in a door attached to a weak frame remains vulnerable to forced entry, and is equivalent to putting a padlock on a paper bag.

In order for an exterior door to be an effective barrier between the burglar and their target, three aspects of a door assembly must be addressed and secured: *the door, the door frame, and the lock.*

### THE DOOR

Exterior doors are often constructed of soft-wood products filled with insulating material and covered by veneer or metal sheeting. To improve security, it is extremely important that exterior doors be solid-core and include a method to protect the door's susceptibility to door edge splitting. (see photo below)

All exterior doors should be 1 3/4 inches thick. Steel doors should be a minimum of 24 gauge. Regardless of their type, most residential doors have wood-framed edges, which need to be protected to prevent splitting at the deadbolt. To counter door splitting during an attack, the door should be equipped with an escutcheon plate, or door "reinforcer." Escutcheon plates are found in most hardware stores and are easy to install. An escutcheon plate significantly increases the rigidity of the door edge and reduces the chance of the door splitting around the deadbolt area. Some steel-edge doors are adequately protected without an escutcheon plate.



### THE DOOR FRAME

The door frame is often referred to as the door jamb, which is inherently weak. In most cases, the door frame is the weakest component of the door assembly. Door frames are usually constructed of soft wood and offer little or no resistance to splitting. The most important point of any door security system is the place where the deadbolt lock meets the frame. This is the point "where the rubber meets the road." Adequately anchoring the strike plate to the wall structure of the house is critical. A strike plate is a piece of metal, usually brass or steel, that attaches to the door frame and receives the lock bolt.

Standard strike plates are secured with two screws, which offer little or no protection against door-frame failure. It is recommended that all exterior door frames be fitted with high-security strike plates. Available in a variety of designs, high-security strike plates utilize four or six offset screws and are usually constructed of heavy-gauge brass or steel. It is further recommended the strike plate be secured with at least 3-inch screws with a hardwood filler (blocker) inserted between the door jamb and wall structure (studs). The hardwood filler should extend a minimum of 12-inches above and below the strike plate. Commercially-made security products consisting of aluminum plates that install behind the door frame are available which can substitute for a hardwood filler. This type of reinforcement method has proven to be very effective while maintaining aesthetics.

For an added measure of security, it is recommended that all door hinges be anchored with at least 3-inch screws and shimmed. While less likely an occurrence, the possibility exists a burglar could attack the door from its hinged side.

Prevalent in residential subdivisions are entryways with side lights (pictured below, left) on one or both sides of the exterior door. While these types of doors are aesthetically pleasing, without proper security, they offer very little protection. The Crime Prevention Unit, working in cooperation with area homebuilders, tested a product which reinforces door frames for side-light units. A "jamb brace" (pictured, right) can be installed in an existing door frame, or ordered with new doors from local millwork companies in the Kansas City metropolitan area.



The snap on cover conceals the "retro-fit" security product from view (right)

**THE DEADBOLT**

When choosing a deadbolt, it is important it have the following minimum specifications:

- X *Minimum 1/4 inch interlocking carriage bolts to hold the cylinder halves together.*
- X *Tapered cylinder guard.*
- X *Hardened steel bolt with a 1-inch throw.*
- X *Bolt encased in a single piece housing.*
- X *Bolt constructed to limit internal movement or "play" when bolt is fully extended*

Not all deadbolts are created equal. They appear similar on the exterior, but the internal components are critical to the overall integrity of the lock. Inquire and ensure the deadbolt meets or exceeds ANSI grade 2 testing standards.



To compare lock quality, review Consumer Reports September 1998 Home Security Issue.

**PATIO DOOR (SLIDING DOOR)**

Common on both old and new homes are patio or sliding doors. While patio doors contain a large glass area, breaking glass is one of the least desirable ways for a burglar to gain entry. The amount of noise involved in breaking the glass, and the potential for suffering an injury, ensures most burglars will look for an easier and safer mode of entry. Measures should still be enacted to protect the glass area against breakage.

The application of an impact-resistant material, such as security film, may be considered. Security film has limitations, so it is critical to install such products to manufacturer's specifications. A superior glazing product is laminated glass. Laminated glass is the type of glass used in automobile windshields. It offers resistance to penetration other glass products do not possess.

Patio doors can also be defeated by prying the lock, sliding the door open, or by lifting the door out of its track. Fortunately, both of these types of attacks can be prevented. To prevent forcing the door open, a secondary-locking device reinforcing the door lock should be used. Examples include pins or "charlie bars." Available at most hardware stores, these devices are inexpensive and easily installed. To prevent the patio door from being lifted out, it is recommended a homeowner use evenly spaced screws inserted in the upper slide track. The head of the screws should protrude just enough to allow free movement of the door, but prevent the door from being lifted out of its track (pictured, next page).



**Screws are placed just above the door in the header, eliminating upward motion.**

### **WINDOWS AND GLASS**

In Overland Park, roughly 10% of all residential burglars enter through windows. Very few windows are manufactured with security as the main consideration. Most windows are designed for aesthetics and energy efficiency. Basement windows are extremely vulnerable and offer virtually no resistance to forced entry. The typical basement window is held in place by two spring-latches. These windows are typically constructed poorly and offer inadequate locking devices. Basement-window security can be improved with installation of security bars or glass blocks. While increasing the security of the residence, bars and glass blocks can restrict occupants from escaping the residence during a house fire. This should be considered prior to installing bars or blocks



**Laminated glass**

588-97. Windows meeting or exceeding this standard have been tested for their ability to resist forced-entry attacks. Window units meeting the ASTM standard are an improvement from the typical builders-grade window unit and are more costly. Laminated glass (pictured above) should also be

Single or double-hung windows are difficult to secure. Casement windows offer a better form of security. When considering window replacement or during construction of a new home, ask whether the window unit meets or exceeds the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) F

considered to enhance the overall security of window units. Laminated glass consists of two panes of glass with a tough plastic interlayer that makes forced entry extremely difficult. The glass may crack, but it will take several blows for a burglar to penetrate it. This type of window will not sacrifice aesthetics to enhance the overall security of the home. The ability to exit of the house in the event of fire is not compromised for security purposes, because building codes mandate windows open from the inside. Having to break glass to facilitate escapes during fires is not recommended.

### **LIGHTING**

Lighting can serve as an effective deterrent to burglars. Lighting is often the most prescribed, yet misunderstood security recommendation. In general, a residence will benefit from leaving the lights on during hours of darkness. Lighting assists the police with identification of street addresses and provides the entire neighborhood a more secure feeling.

The sides and rear of the home are different. Motion-sensitive lighting is preferred for several reasons:

- ❖ It increases the potential for witnesses by suddenly illuminating the environment. The human eye is naturally attracted to light.
- ❖ It saves on light-bulb maintenance costs, because lights are activated only when motion is detected, and they cycle off when activity ceases.
- ❖ It may create a "fight or flight" response in the perpetrator.

Burglary research conducted by criminologists list motion activated-lighting as a significant deterrent to burglars who committed their crimes at night.

### **DOGS**

Dogs have proven to be an effective deterrent to burglars. Researchers Paul Cromwell, James Olson and D'Aunn Avary write in their book, Breaking and Entering: An Ethnographic Analysis of Burglary (Sage, 1991)

**When asked what were considered absolute "no go" factors, most burglars responded that dogs were second only to occupancy. However, approximately 30% of the informants initially discounted the presence of dogs as a deterrent. Yet, during "ride alongs" the sight or sound of a dog at a potential target site almost invariably resulted in a "no go" decision.**

But are all dogs a deterrent? Professional dog handlers suggest some breeds are better at "watch dog" duties than other breeds. Dr. Stanley Coren in

his book, The Intelligence of Dogs: A Guide to the Thoughts, Emotions and Inner Lives of Our Canine Companions (Bantam, 1995) consulted experts and found the following breeds to be good “guard dogs”: Bull Mastiff, Rottweiler, Doberman Pinscher, Komondor, Puli, Giant Schnauzer, German Shepard, Rhodesian Ridgeback, and Kuvasz. Good “watch dogs” are the Rottwiler, German Shepard, West Highlander White Terrier, Yorkshire Terrier, Cairn Terrier, Airedale Terrier, Poodle, and Miniature Schnauzer.



**Breeds such as the Rhodesian Ridgeback and Rottweiler are good guard and watch dogs, but do require close supervision and obedience.**

The worst watch dogs identified by Dr. Coren are: Bloodhound, Newfoundland, English Bulldog, Pug or Scottish Deerhound. A dog is a big responsibility and more information can be obtained through your local veterinarian or the American Kennel Club web site, [www.akc.org](http://www.akc.org)

### **OCCUPANCY**

The single greatest deterrent for most burglars is occupancy. Consider what Cromwell, Avary and Olson write about occupancy.

**Almost all burglars avoid selecting as targets houses that are occupied. Only two of our informants (from 30 active burglars) stated that they would enter a residence that they knew was occupied. Therefore, it is important that the burglar develop techniques to probe the potential target site to determine if anyone is at home. The most common probe used by our informants was to send one of the burglars to the door to knock or ring the doorbell...**

**Any strategy which gives a house an “illusion of occupancy” while the residents are gone, will serve to significantly reduce burglary.**

Creating the “illusion of occupancy” may be more difficult than it sounds. The FBI’s Uniformed Crime Reports (UCR), indicate over 50% of all residential

burglaries occur during the day. Lights and televisions on timers have limitations. Another interesting fact which the researchers point out is the method by which burglars check homes for occupancy; ringing the doorbell or knocking. In 2000, the UCR reported 2,049,946 burglaries, with two-thirds being residential in nature.

### **CHILDREN HOME ALONE**

One of the common recommendations made to parents with children who stay home alone is “don’t answer the door.” Given the information about a burglar’s method of checking for occupancy, it is not recommended for children to remain quiet to create the illusion the house is unoccupied. Parents should consider strategies for their children to deal with this possibility. A child opening the door is much different than children making noise and creating the unmistakable “fact” a house is occupied. If children are left home alone, the physical security of the home is paramount. Misconceptions were demonstrated in the fall of 2001 when Prairie Village and Overland Park experienced three home invasions where children were home alone during the day. The burglar came to the front door, knocked, got no answer and proceeded to the rear of residence and kicked in the back doors. Given the deterrent value of occupancy, parents should teach their children strategies to acknowledge someone at the door rather than to remain silent.

### **THREAT AND RISK ASSESSMENT**

The intent of this brochure is to aid homeowners in self protection from unskilled, opportunistic burglars and their common entry methods. However, every individual, home, or neighborhood is different and may dictate or require specific security strategies. Constable Henri Berube, CPP of the Peel Regional Police has identified five threat levels in a residential setting.

- Level 5: Opportunistic/Unskilled Burglar**
- Level 4: Professional/Skilled Burglar**
- Level 3: Home Invasion/Robbery**
- Level 2: Stalking/Domestic Violence**
- Level 1: Terrorist Threat**

Crime Prevention Practitioners can help identify your specific threat. The opportunistic burglar’s behavior is impacted by simple precautions, while a violent or abusive perpetrator is motivated by emotion and anger. For each of the five levels listed, security strategies vary.

### ***CITIZENS FOR CRIME PREVENTION***

The Neighborhood Watch Program employs the cooperative involvement of residents in a neighborhood. The program's goal is for neighbors to become acquainted with each other and to actively prevent and combat crime. Members of a Neighborhood Watch Program assist their police department by providing many additional eyes and ears. The City of Overland Park has approximately one uniformed police officer for every 800 residents. Protective neighborhoods are needed to help prevent criminal activity.

Uniformed officers cannot be present when every situation occurs. It is up to you, as an interested citizen, to report what you see and hear when it is happening. You are strongly encouraged to limit your involvement to placing telephone calls for police service. You should not attempt to take action on your own or try to apprehend suspects. Your job is to be a good witness. Our job as trained law enforcement officers is to apprehend criminals using your information.

To start a Neighborhood Watch Program in your area, contact the Overland Park Police Department Crime Prevention Unit, (913)327-6917 or (913)327-6929. Help us reduce criminal opportunity!

### ***OPERATION IDENTIFICATION***

Operation Identification originated in Monterey Park, CA, in 1963. This program is designed to prevent theft and burglary by notifying potential thieves that all property in a home can readily be identified by law enforcement agencies.

#### ***How does this prevent thefts?***

If a marked item is stolen, it is more difficult to trade or sell and could be used as direct evidence against the thief if found in their possession. After you have marked items of value, you will be provided Operation Identification decals to place in locations a thief might use to enter your home, i.e., doors or windows. This notice can be a major factor in preventing burglaries. The success of the program depends both on

marking your property and displaying the decals.

#### ***What marks should I engrave on my property?***

Engraving your property with your driver's license number, preceded by the state abbreviation (Example: ***KSDL K00005789***). The item should be marked near the manufacturer's serial number if possible. If not, mark the item on the bottom or backside. Items can be marked in more than one place if desired, but at least one marking should be visible without having to dismantle the item.



### ***ALARMS***

Effective alarm systems serve as a deterrent to intruders. They can alert authorities to intrusions and provide residents with peace of mind while their home is unoccupied.

However, alarm systems have limitations. Alarms cannot prevent an intruder's entry. They depend on a police response. If an alarm is activated while a house is occupied, the alarm system can seize the phone line inhibiting a resident's ability to dial 911! The most prominent problem with most alarm systems is false activation. 99% of all alarm activations received by the Overland Park Police are false. Prior to the purchase of an alarm system, we strongly encourage residents to contact the Crime Prevention Unit to match their needs, concerns, and lifestyle with the most appropriate security strategy. For more information, see the Crime Prevention Fact Sheet "[Understanding Alarms.](#)"



## Crime Prevention Fact Sheet

# “Understand Alarms”

## Reducing Criminal Opportunity

March 2005



pg. 1

Effective alarm systems serve as a deterrent to intruders, aid in alerting the police to problems, and provide peace of mind while you are away from your home or business. Alarm systems and their applications vary. You need to know if a particular alarm system will provide the expected security. Before investing in an alarm system, you should consider the following information.

### PHYSICAL SECURITY

Is your residence or business vulnerable to intruders? If your doors and windows are vulnerable to attack, an alarm system alone will not secure the premises. Addressing the physical security of the premises should be your first priority. You should first replace hollow core doors with metal or solid core doors; install high security deadbolts; ensure strike plates are adequately anchored; and, ensure all windows are equipped with adequate latching mechanisms. Proper physical security increases the effectiveness of your alarm system. An alarm system should compliment other security components, but cannot stand alone to create an entire security strategy.

### SECURITY STRATEGY

An effective security strategy incorporates a concept known as the Three D's: **Deter, Detect, Delay**. Detering is advertising the fact an alarm system is in place and appropriate measures have been taken to secure the property. Detecting is the primary function of the alarm system and involves notification to a responding party the perimeter is being breached. Delaying is the primary function of physical security measures such as the solid core doors, deadbolts, and adequately anchored strike plates. An example of utilizing the three D's is the application of a two-door system. The exterior door is alarmed, while the interior door is a security door. Once the exterior door has been defeated, the alarm activates. While the alarm has been activated, entry still is delayed into the home/business. The interior door allows time for a response to the alarm. The intruder is

faced with a dilemma: stay and risk apprehension by responding units or flee the scene.

### PROTECT YOUR PROTECTION

Alarm systems are designed to aid in the protection of your personal property. Although alarm systems are a security tool, they are vulnerable to attack. What measures are employed by the alarm company to protect your security system? Most alarm systems are dependent on the phone line for their ability to make notification to the alarm company and the police. What if the phone line was inoperable or sabotaged? Does your alarm system still have the capability to make a notification? Three back-up systems are available for phone lines: cellular phones, radios and dedicated phone lines. More important than the phone line is the alarm system's power source. All alarm systems require electrical power. What if power was suddenly interrupted? The [winter storms of February 2002](#) and [October 1996](#) resulted in power outages for days. This is a prime example of how the electrical system can be interrupted for an extended period of time. Most alarm systems come with some form of alternate-battery power. Most alarm systems have battery back-up which can sustain the



Battery shown in a control panel

operation of the system for 4 to 24 hours. Some questions to ask your alarm representative are: What is the number of hours an alternate power source can sustain the alarm system? In the event the battery runs low, does the system alert the company? Does the battery still operate the siren and any other integrated audible and visual aids? These important questions should be



## Crime Prevention Fact Sheet

# “Understand Alarms”

## Reducing Criminal Opportunity

March 2005



pg. 2

answered to your satisfaction before purchasing an alarm system.

### AUDIBLE AND VISUAL AIDS

A quality alarm system will utilize both audible and visual aids once an intrusion has been detected. With any alarm system, an intruder knows a cushion of time exists between when they trigger the alarm system and the time someone responds to investigate. By utilizing audible aids (bells or sirens) on the exterior of the property, witnesses nearby are now alerted to an alarm activation. Individuals in the area of an alarm may hear it, but may be unable to isolate exactly where the alarm is located. Some type of visual aid such as a strobe or flashing lights will help to immediately draw attention to the affected premises. Audible and



Note the outside audible and strobe above the garage door to maximize the witness potential of the neighborhood.

visual aids will severely limit the intruder’s time, or eliminate an intruder’s threat altogether. An intruder wants to avoid being seen, identified or apprehended. The use of audible and visual aids increases the effectiveness of any alarm system, even if the phone line has been severed or defeated. The annunciation of an intruder is still being made to surrounding neighbors, even if the alarm company is not receiving notification an intrusion is taking place.

### DELAY

Some amount of a **delay** is built into all alarm systems to allow the resident time to disarm it. During criminal incidents, delays only work in

favor of the intruder. Most delays are 30 to 45 seconds in length. Video tapes of actual burglaries show intruders spending as little as 50 seconds in a business hauling away a substantial amount of merchandise. The delay on an alarm system should be as short as possible, and even non-existent in some circumstances. Only one door should have a delay to allow legitimate entry by homeowners and employees. All other points of entry and areas alarmed should have immediate annunciation and notification.



Key pads to disarm your systems should be within close proximity of the entry point. This can help minimize false alarms.

An adequate security system should be designed specifically for **YOUR** business or home. The alarm company should take into account your needs, expectations, concerns, lifestyle and budget. An alarm system does not come in a pre-arranged package. A reputable company should be able to deliver satisfactory protection to reasonably fit most budgets. Be wary of the company willing to quote a price over the telephone, without making a careful and detailed survey of your home or business. Be sure to obtain a **detailed written, description** of what you are buying!





## Crime Prevention Fact Sheet

# “Understand Alarms”

## Reducing Criminal Opportunity

March 2005



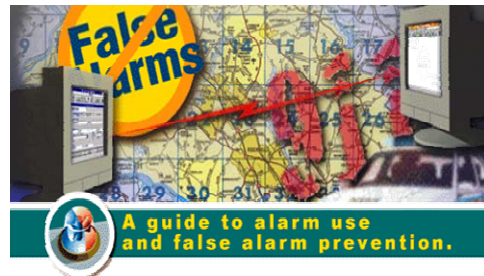
pg. 3

### **FALSE ALARMS**

In Overland Park, 99% of all alarms reported to the Police Department are false. Over 50% of those false alarms were a result of user error. In 2004, the Police Department received 6,532 alarm activations. Of the 6,532 alarms, only 37 were activated as the result of actual burglaries. Make sure you understand your system thoroughly! Be aware of what it can and cannot do. Be familiar with its operating details and obtain verbal and written instructions covering all of its functions. Check to see if animals, hanging signs, or rapid climate changes caused by the heating and cooling system will activate the alarm system. Preventive maintenance to an alarm system should be as routine as changing the oil in your car. Proper preventive maintenance will assist in identifying any problems and minimize your exposure to false alarms.

The City of Overland Park has an ordinance designed to reduce the number of false alarms. Upon the third false activation of an alarm system, the Police Department will begin fining alarm users. Fines can be as high as \$250 for each false alarm. After the tenth false alarm, the Chief of Police has the option to completely cancel police response to an alarm address. Alarm systems are only as effective as the responses they generate. In Overland Park, the average response time to an alarm address is approximately eight (8) minutes. The average burglary takes only two to three (2-3) minutes.

***The City of Overland Park offers a False Alarm Prevention Class to residents and business owners.*** The class educates alarm users about the city’s alarm ordinance; instructs participants how to obtain an alarm permit; discusses incorporation an overall security strategy; and, explains how to maximize the effectiveness of an alarm system. If you are interested in attending the class, contact, the Alarm Coordinator at 913-327-6722.



### **SUMMARY**

Several measures may be utilized to ensure the proper selection of an alarm system. Don’t wait until the alarm company representative is in your home or office before you consider the professional reliability of an alarm company. Investigate the company’s credibility before meeting with their representative. The Better Business Bureau, Consumer Protection Agency and Chamber of Commerce are excellent sources to research a company’s professionalism and dependability. Are they a member of the Kansas City Burglar and Fire Alarm Association? Ask for the names of randomly selected customers. A reputable alarm company will not hesitate to provide references and credentials upon request.

**OPPD + KCBFAA + YOU**

### **Traits of a Good Alarm Company**

- Provide a written instruction manual
- Provide clear training at installation
- Willing to provide free refresher training
- Available to answer follow-up questions
- Prompt & effective repair of the system
- Alarm verification by telephone call, video or audio built into your system
- Proactive about identifying and correcting the causes of false alarms

Should you have additional questions, please contact Officer Mike Betten at (913)895-6334 (email: [mike.betten@opkansas.org](mailto:mike.betten@opkansas.org)) or the Alarm Coordinator’s Office at (913)327-6722.



## Crime Prevention Fact Sheet

# “Understand Alarms”

## Reducing Criminal Opportunity

March 2005



pg. 4

### **Consider the following questions of an alarm representative:**

**Is the alarm representative selling a police response, a neighborhood response or both?**

*The average response by a police agency to a security system is 15 minutes. As mentioned in the article, alarms are very dependent on the type of response generated. The alarm industry sells a police response; however, a neighborhood response can be just as effective and more efficient. Neighbors can verify an actual burglary and immediately notify the police. A burglar’s greatest fear is being detected and having that information forwarded to the police. Maximize the burglar’s fear with an outside audible aid and strobe light. The disadvantage to this strategy is continuous false alarms will cause your neighbors a great deal of irritation. This diminishes the effectiveness of a neighborhood response.*

**Is the system being purchased or leased?**

*Some alarm companies require the customer to sign a two or three-year monitoring contract. In some cases, that agreement is a lease and not an actual purchase. After the contract for the monitoring has expired, does the customer or the alarm company own the system?*

**Does the system have some type of phone line protection?**

*If the alarm company is selling a police response, what precautions have been taken to protect the phone line? Some companies claim that if the phone line is cut, the alarm will activate. This could be true; however, it will not generate a call to the central monitoring station to summon a police response. Occasionally phone lines are tested or go dead, and a false alarm could be triggered. Careful considerations should be given to phone line protection.*

**Has the alarm company addressed your specific needs or are they selling the “cookie cutter” package?**

*Your specific concerns should be determined before there is an attempt to sell an alarm system. Are you getting an alarm system for your specific home, or are being sold a “standard” system? The standard system includes: three (3) contacts, one (1) motion detector, a keypad and an inside audible. Will the typical system adequately cover your house and provide the protection you expect? If not, consult with other alarm companies or an independent security professional.*

**Is the alarm company familiar with the Overland Park alarm ordinance?**

*Alarm users are required to obtain an alarm permit prior to activating their alarm system. The Overland Park Police may not respond to an alarm that has not obtain a permit. After two false alarms within a one-year period, the police department can charge fines for each false alarm. Fines can increase to \$250 per response.*

**What is the recommended maintenance schedule for an alarm system?**

*Alarms are mechanical devices, and they will require routine maintenance. Periodic maintenance is necessary to minimize the chances of generating a false alarm. Is the periodic maintenance included in the monthly monitoring fee, or does it result in an additional charge? Motion detectors require cleaning, door contacts can become stuck and back-up batteries can become inoperable. It is strongly suggested every alarm user inspect their alarm system annually.*

**What amount of time delay is built into the alarm system.**

*The delay is designed to give the alarm user adequate time to deactivate the system during routine activities. However, this is time that the burglar can use to commit the burglary. Some companies have a standard 45-second delay. Ideally, the shorter the delay, the less time the criminal has to commit the crime.*