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About the Author

Arthur Cavendish wrote his book to help people improve the security of their home and family.

Arthur said, "I started looking at this when I realized that some neighbors had been burgled or had other problems around their homes."

"Like many people, I had not been very concerned about it until there were a couple of incidents near us. I realized that it could easily have been our property and family that was attacked."

"So, I started to look at what could be done. I got advice from people with professional experience and did a lot of research."

"I believe the police do a great job but we need to do what we can to discourage the criminals. I was amazed how many people actually make simple mistakes which help the criminals and make the authorities job harder!"

"Some people try too hard and actually get themselves in trouble!"

"My book is for anyone that realizes the problem is real and the time for action is now!"

"Some common advice doesn't work in current circumstances".

"Being prepared is worth the time, effort and expense because it's for us, our families and community!"

Introduction

I hope that this book will help readers and their families be happier and safer because they are more aware of potential risks and understand what can be done simply and with minimum expense to improve their personal safety and the security around your home.

The rate of property and other crimes in our homes is rising despite the best efforts of police and other agencies.

Anyone that has suffered from these crimes will tell you the effects are deep and long-lasting.

It's not just the actual event and loss.

Many feel unsafe long afterwards.

Some develop a justifiable fear it could happen again and that members of their family could be physically attacked.

They have to deal with the replacement of those things which can be replaced, repairing of their property and taking steps to reduce the possibility of future similar events.

This ebook explains some of the options which you need to consider when you review and improve the level of security in and around your home.

There are many ideas here and some points which will help you avoid mistakes which make the criminals' efforts easier.

Each person's situation is unique but I hope the included information will help you whatever the age of the people in your home or for whom you have some responsibility.

I've also included some information about personal safety and using the Internet because all of these areas are now intertwined through our lives.

My focus is helping to keep you prepared and everyone safe and happy.

Let's move around an average home and see what can be done to improve the security of the contents, including the people and pets.

Modus Operandi – The Way They Do It



Crooks don't work as hard to set up and do a burglary as shown on many TV shows.

Often, the householder makes it easy for them as we discuss in a later chapter.

The intruders look for an empty house which could have some valuable, portable goods they could get without much trouble.

They don't usually park right in front of the target, in case somebody is inside or a neighbor might see them and remember details when the police start checking after the robbery.

If it is a major operation, there could be extra people involved; a look-out and a driver as well as the burglar. But, we'll focus on a lone operator.

They park the vehicle at least a block away. They walk down past their target so they can scope whether there are any nosy neighbors or noisy dogs near the target.

This walk also lets them look around the property. Maybe there is an easier or more private way in than through the front.

If he doesn't find something, he goes to the door.

He can safely wait a few seconds, listening for a sign of someone being home.

If he hears nothing, he knocks and waits a few seconds.

He might get through the front door if the lock is weak or unlocked. That happens more times than you might believe!

More often, the front door will be locked and he will go to the back of the house.

He will check the windows at the side in case some are unlocked or even open. If he finds one and feels the risk of being seen is low, he will get in.

If there is no easy access, he will check the back yard from the side and then go to the back door.

He will knock, just in case you are inside, maybe asleep.

If there is no answer, he will check if the door is easy to open. Many people leave the back door unlocked! Or, they depend on a cheap lock to keep intruders out.

If they can't break the lock, or don't want to take the minute or so that might take, burglars will often kick a weak door in at this point.

If someone hears one or two kicks, they may not even wonder what is going on. And, two hard kicks is often all it takes!

He's well aware of the most likely places your valuable and portable items will be.

He can fill a bag of yours with the most salable items (which he may already have orders for) and leave quickly.

So, I will give you some tips to improve your defense and make their task a bit harder.

If You are Burgled

The Emotional and other Costs.

The real cost of a break-in is much more than the replacement value of what was damaged or taken.



You could be physically injured. This could require time away from work or at home with reduced capacity to handle your daily tasks. This can be the most stressful part of any crime, especially when a member of your family or a pet is hurt.

You have to contact your insurer. That's when you find out how good your cover really is!

You need to repair any damage to your home, including whatever is needed to ensure that the same method of entry is not likely to be used for another attack.

Replace or repair those goods which you can.

Deal with the fear that it could happen again. I must warn you that some burglars do return after a few weeks when they think that the homeowner is unlikely to make any improvements to security..

You and your partner will also need to realize that your children and your parents will probably need help and patience to help them through this experience.

If You are Home when it Happens.

If you have children or elderly people in other parts of the house, you have to decide whether to try to reach them or say where you are unless you hear them needing help.

If you move about the house, you need to decide whether you will make a lot of noise or move quietly.

Moving quietly may keep you safe.

Noisy progress may send the intruder running. But, many are under the

influence of drugs or alcohol and not thinking reasonably.

Also, a confrontation is probably a greater risk to you.

Try to avoid touching surfaces or objects which the intruder may have touched.

First, always call the police. Use the emergency number if the intruder is likely to still be in the house or grounds of your home.

Tell the operator the basic details. Your name, address, any information which will help them get help to you quickly and any details you have about the intruder.

You should have your information, including the address on a script near your phone so that you don't have to think about what to say when you are under this pressure.

Take your cell phone to your bedroom each night even if you have a regular phone extension there in case the intruder cuts or disconnects the phone line.

Don't risk physical injury. Things can be replaced. You can't be.

If you injure the intruder you may face charges or a civil suit by him!

If the Intruder has Gone.

Call the police from your mobile phone or from a neighbor's house. This will reduce the disturbance of the crime scene..

Avoid touching things.

Check your family and pets.

Understand that police may be a while responding depending on the significance of other incidents they may be attending and the number of officers on duty.

If You see Signs of a Break-in

If you come home to find there's been a break-in, your first thought will be for any family members or pets which might be inside.

If you think they may be inside, you will probably enter, even at risk to yourself.

But, it is much safer to wait a couple of minutes.



Use your cell phone to call the police.

Then, if you decide to enter the house, keep alert and wary.

Make some noise as you do so. Most burglars want to avoid confrontation and they don't want to be there when the police arrive.

Often, there will be a significant delay in the response due to the demand on the police services.

Alarm Systems

Go for Quality



False alarms are possible with most alarm systems. They happen when the protected area they are set up to cover is invaded by some wind-born rubbish, a stray pet, some other creature or there is some mistake made in the installation.

This happens so often that many places levy fines on people whose false alarms cause the police or ambulance to respond.

Even good systems can have false alarms.

If you are thinking about getting an alarm system, you should first consider one to protect the outside of your home.

Keeping any intruder out is the most valuable benefit of most alarm systems.

Some devices used in alarm systems include:

Sensors attached to an audible alarm can alert you and anyone else in the area that someone is trying to get into your property.

But, they must be placed where they are not set off by stray animals, rubbish blown around by the wind and other items.

Magnetic switches are used on windows and doors. Opening the door or window changes the magnetic field and sets off the alarm.

Pressure switches can be in mats. When they are stepped on, the alarm will sound. These are common in shop doorways.

In your home, you need an easy way to switch it off when the family are moving around the house frequently.

Just make sure to switch them back on before bedtime and whenever you

leave home.

Watchdog?

A dog is probably the best low-cost alarm you might consider. But, their upkeep with food, vet bills and accessories is likely to be a couple of hundred dollars a year.

They also need training, exercise and company.

If you have one of the larger breeds, a real watchdog, you may be required to license it and follow rules as to where you take it and be responsible for any damage to people or property it may do.

This can even include if they grab an intruder!

Which Alarm or Company?

You must do some research in your community about the reputation and record of the alarm providers or watch services you are thinking of dealing with.

The number of companies offering alarm systems and watching services is constantly changing. The set-up costs are not high but the ongoing costs require good sales, competent and loyal staff and a strong reputation.

The failure rate is fairly high as the pool of suitable staff is limited.

If you sign up with a company which goes out of business, you may have to buy a new service which costs more than the one you lost your money on.

Will an Alarm Really Protect You?

An alarm system may reduce your risk of being burgled but it is not a guaranteed preventative measure.

If the intruder knows you have an alarm and is prepared to get in anyway, the system can only alert you of the break-in and notify the police or private watch service that you need assistance.

If you have many valuable items, your insurance company may require you to have an alarm system.

If you have sick or elderly people in your home, an alarm system will give them some protection and also perhaps better peace of mind for both

them and you since you can't be there all the time.

Panic Buttons

You can usually get panic buttons to put in each bedroom and anywhere else where there might be a risk so they can summon help.

Alarm Stickers

Should you display warning stickers that you have an alarm system installed?

Some intruders may decide to choose a neighbor's home if they see your stickers.



Others will know the details of that brand of alarm and be willing to test their arm (they don't watch TV all the time in jail!).

You may deter some thieves by putting up stickers even if you don't have any system.

You can buy stickers from various stores but most intruders would be familiar with the names of most reputable alarm systems and not worried by most unknown ones.

Some people that have an alarm system, use stickers which are from a different brand of system to the one which they have.

Silent or Audible Alarms?

All domestic systems should have an audible alarm even if it is monitored by an external service.

The audible alarm will discourage most intruders from staying on your property and avoiding a direct confrontation, where possible, and is just common-sense!

Lights

Light is your friend and makes the intruder's task a bit harder.

Motion Sensor Lights

These are very popular and effective. You usually need an electrician to install them. If you are allowed to install them yourself in your jurisdiction, make sure you set up the wiring so there is no risk of moisture getting into the system.

You also need some way to prevent the circuit being easily switched off from outside your home.

As well as being a security device, they provide light for when you or a family member has to go out or return home in the dark.

Their big advantage over floodlights is they only light up when motion is detected in the area.

But, you still need to work out the placement of the lights so that they don't cause discomfort to your neighbors by flooding their bedrooms at odd hours of the night.

They are usually installed fairly high on a wall so they cannot be easily interfered with.

Doors

These are the first point of entry for intruders.

Some doors are too light-weight to be used for entry points to your home.

Some people buy and have strong locks installed but don't consider how strong their doors are. If someone can easily kick the door apart, getting a quality lock is a waste of money and effort. If you have hollow doors, get them replaced. That will cost some money but it's an important factor in reducing opportunity-driven intrusions.

Windows or decorative glass panels in or near doors will increase the risk to you.

The glass panels show people outside of your home when someone moves across the area inside the door.

You can check the options available to strengthen the resistance of your doors. This could include putting a reinforcing bracket around the part of the door where the lock and handles are.

That is only useful if money for replacement doors is not available.

It's also essential to train everyone to lock the doors when they go out and also when they are home but may be in other parts of the house.

Peepholes

Many take some basic steps like adding a peephole to their front and back doors but put off going further.

The basic peephole is very common but they have limitations.

The most common type is a metal or plastic tube which you have to almost press your eye against so that you can see anything at all.

That removes the light which the person outside saw coming from the peephole, so they know someone is there even if you don't say anything or make any noise.

These units have a very low-quality image which is very dependent on the cleanliness of the lens and enough light being available .

Getting very close to the door so you can use the peephole can put you at risk if they decide to break through it.

They could cover the outside of the viewer with black tape or dirt and you would not be sure who was there or even how many people were there!



There are more advanced viewers available which can be worth the extra cost.

If you decide to invest in a video unit, you will have better information about who is outside but you need to think about where you will locate the camera and protect it from damage or even being stolen.

Review Your Home Security

Do a security review, using this book.

The review will probably take more than an hour for you to assemble the information.

Make notes about things you need to get, repair or replace and anything which is possibly a hazard to your family or visitors.

Start with the boundaries of your property and work slowly through the whole outside area.

Take it slowly. From reading this book, you will have got some ideas and started to look at your situation a bit more critically than most householders usually do.

Is your fence in good condition?

Even if it is, it may not be a deterrent to an intruder. Some fences are constructed in ways which make getting over them easier than it should be.

Many owners make it even easier by leaving ladders (!) or other items in their yard so the intruder can get into next door's yard very easily.

Also, if the fences are solid, they may help the intruder remain unseen by your neighbors but not prevent them from seeing your family in the backyard.

Most places ban the use of barbed wire on household fences.

You also could be sued in many places if an intruder is injured getting into or away from your property even if they don't have permission!

If you have plants near the windows, the intruder may see in better than you can see him!

Large plants and trees can give him cover to get close to your house unseen and a way to get to the upper level of your property.

Keep your plants at least nine inches below the lowest part of your windows and don't plant anything closer than eighteen inches from doors.

Too Much Information

We know that we should strictly limit what information we share with anyone on the Internet.

But, it's equally important to limit what a casual passer-by can find out about us.

Don't Advertise

Intruders often drive down a street, looking for houses which seem to be good targets.

If you keep doing the things mentioned in this chapter, you make yourself more of a target.

People throw out the packaging off new appliances, entertainment devices and other valuable items which can alert thieves that their property could be worth a visit.

Tear up the boxes and put them in your recycle bin. If you want to keep the packaging for moving the contents later, flatten it and store it out of sight.

Sometimes, family members leave expensive items where they can be seen from the street.

Don't let your children leave their toys in the yard or at the front of the property. This gives strangers information about the family and that there could be valuable entertainment items there. It can also attract the attention of people who could harm the children.

Your mailbox is a source of information. Don't put anything but your house number and your surname on it.

If you put more there, someone could start collecting more personal information by using your name and address.

Don't Invite Trouble

When a burglar looks for somewhere to rob, an open gate does not just make it easy to access, it indicates the owner is not bothered much about keeping their property secure.

That's not a defining factor, but it is one pointer to the experienced thief.

Some favor houses on corner lots because it means there is only one neighbor who might have a good view of the area where the intruder breaks in.

Large bushes and trees help them stay concealed and can make it easier to get up to the second level if there is one.

A picnic table and chairs can be used for the same purpose.

If they are close to your fence, they make getting away from the property much easier.

Intruders will try to plan how they will get away from the property while they are entering it. The time they have to be on the property is the most risky period for them.

Noisy pets are a minor deterrent. If they see a "Beware of the Dog" sign, they may move on but not always. If there are small bowls or toys around, they will not worry too much.

If you leave mail and other personal documents around in your home, the intruder can use the information or pass it on to other crooks who can misuse it.

Home Security Myths

Most burglaries happen at night

The basic flaw with this suggestion is that most people are home at night while a majority are out for at least a few hours during the day.

Burglars are less likely to be noticed during the day because there will be more people in most streets that don't live there each day.

Strangers walking around the streets at night are usually looked at more seriously because they are recognized as not being local and because we have more time to watch them.

Crooks want to check out a property before making their move and it's much easier to see the details during the day.

Good Security costs a lot of Money

Good security does not cost as much as the cost of recovering from an intrusion.

Cheap gear can cost you much more because it won't be effective and still leaves you vulnerable with a false sense of being secure.

There are many effective and low-cost or free ways to improve the security of your family and property.

But, don't skimp on the cost of the security items you do buy unless you are sure that your purchases are of good quality.

Check for Gaps in your Defenses

What gaps are there in your defenses?”

Most people are aware of the threat, but do not understand how easily they may become a victim.

We may start to think about our security when we hear about a neighbor’s home being broken in to or someone we know is assaulted.

That will spur us to check that our doors lock properly, we remind our kids to be careful and we may even check the insurance policies.

Engraving your Valuables

One of the best ways for protecting our valuable items is to engrave them with an identifying number.

Think carefully about the number you use.

Don’t engrave anything with your social security number or anything which should be kept confidential.

One drawback to engraving is that it may affect the value of the item if you ever you want to sell it. That’s a decision which will have to be made by you.

Patterns are Risky

Avoid sticking to the same routine in movement or schedule. Thieves can use your routine to ambush you outside your home or break into your home when they know you are away!

If you start to use other routes between your home and your work or social activities, you will probably find it more interesting for a while.

But, you will probably find it beneficial to take more interest in the streets you go through and the people and shops you see on the way.

We miss many interesting and even useful experiences by ignoring our surroundings. It can also make us more vulnerable to attack.

If you really look at the areas, you will find it easier to navigate your way around much better.

You will also become a better observer. Then, you will be more likely to notice if someone is following you or taking an unusual interest in your

movements.

This can be a lifesaver or at least make you less likely to be robbed in the street.

This is something to think about if your children walk or ride to school or to friends' places or social events regularly.

Try to arrange for them to go with other children they know or a trusted adult.

In the next chapter, I will give you more tips about making your children a little safer without scaring or upsetting them.

Your Valuables Inventory

We all do an inventory of the most valuable possessions of your family for insurance and will-making.

But, many people forget to update the information given to the company when they get new items of significant value.

There is really no excuse now that most people have computers or smart devices which can be used to create and update these documents very easily.

If you haven't already got an up-to-date inventory, arrange a couple of hours to get one together.

It's a good idea, where possible, for you and your partner to do this together. One might keep adding and checking the list while the other moves any large items and puts items which need to be stored in another part of the property in the right place as you go around.

Don't forget to get your children involved. Some of their gear may be of significant value and they are likely to be devastated if some of their treasures are missing or damaged even if they have little monetary value.

This might also be a good time to sort items which you want to sell or donate to local charity. You could get a few extra dollars and free up valuable space.

Make a note on your device or your wall calendar to check and update your inventory every six months at least. You may find some items have disappeared or been damaged so you can arrange for replacement or repair.

Make sure that you have this information somewhere as well as your computer or in a drawer of your desk.

The computer may be stolen or damaged and the contents of the desk could be destroyed.

You also need to make back-ups of all your significant files and make sure that they are secure somewhere away from your home.

Your Security Inventory

This is very important for your security.

Even if you have a security system or other precautions, you may have become complacent or just unable to find the time to check all aspects of your home regularly for security flaws.

The whole area of your property needs to be looked at as part of your review.

Allow yourself enough time. It's easy to underestimate how long this could take when you first do it.

Gates. All gates should be kept closed. It is something burglars check. They will take open gates to mean there could be unlocked doors or windows as well. Closed (and locked, where appropriate) gates are a sign that the occupants take some care of their situation.

Windows. Keep closed where practical. If they are open, make the gap no wider than necessary and secure them in some way that they cannot be opened more without getting inside the house first.

Close the drapes or blinds unless family members are inside and likely to use the room. At times, keep them closed even when the room is in use if possible.

Check the doors and locks. A cheap lock on a door is not security, it's an invitation few burglars could resist.

Use Strong locks, preferably, two of them on all doors on the outside of your home.

Make sure the door is strong enough to resist being kicked or pried open. If any of your doors are light and hollow, replace them as a priority.

If you can't afford to replace them (think carefully about that) and get professional help to strengthen them with a metal sleeve around the lock area and a sheet of strong board firmly attached to the front of the door with bolts and spring washers.

Check your hinges. Even some heavier doors are supplied with short or weak screws and other fittings. Make sure the screws are long enough to

provide some resistance to forced entry. Keep external doors locked. Make sure the keys cannot be jiggled from the keyhole and drawn out the door on the mat.

Make a list of necessary security updates with the dates you will complete them. Don't delay completion. Excuses won't keep you or your family secure.

The job is never complete. But, each step gives you more confidence and more realistic peace of mind.

Fire Safety

Fire is an ever-present risk in our communities.

Like the police, the fire services do a great job which most of us would not be capable of to the same standard but we must be prepared to be our own first line of defense.

There can be a few more obvious purchases such as **quality fire detectors**.

They are reliable and need little maintenance apart from dusting them and regular replacement with a new quality battery usually every year.

I also suggest you consider at least one fire extinguisher for each car in the family and at least one for your home.

If you have more than one level, an extra extinguisher is a wise purchase.

I also have fire-retardant blankets in the kitchen and in the workshop.

The next thing is to do a fire check, like the security check, of all parts of your home.

There are many things which can cause a fire but they will tell you most of the fires they attend have a few main causes.

These basic precautions will reduce the risks in your home but do regular checks and always investigate anything which might be a sign of a fire in your vicinity.

Have a **Fire Plan** for your home. Make sure that every person that lives with you knows what they and everyone else is supposed to do and where the equipment is for fighting the fire if it is safe to do so.

If you are so unfortunate as to suffer a fire, follow the plan.

The plan should include where everyone should go to get out.

Make sure that everyone has agreed to go to an assembly point close to the property but clear of the fire area and where they won't be in the way of the fire service or other vehicles.

Make sure that an adult has agreed to find and remove pets where it is safe enough. Pets can become hard to handle in these situations. The handler may need a blanket to wrap around them if it is available. Then,

the children and elderly people can focus on just getting themselves out.

Have flashlights with new batteries in each bedroom. Change them regularly so there is no problem. Keep spare globes with the flashlights and check they work every month.

Top Tips

Emergency Call Script

Write a script for using when calling emergency services.

It may sound unnecessary but these events are crises and not everyone will be calm enough to get the message clearly and quickly to the operator. It may not be needed but use it once and you'll be glad you made it.

Give each adult and older child a copy and keep a laminated copy near the phone.

Keep the details brief and only the essentials.

Give them your name, the address and best way to access the property.

Sometimes, that might not be the front of the property.

Tell them it's a burglary, fire or whatever.

Give them your cell-phone number and any other critical details.

Describe yourself or the person who is in charge.

Listen – they may have questions.

Don't be a Hero

The most important thing when there is a burglary or other intrusion is the safety of the humans involved.

Saving possessions is well below that in importance.

And, you are not the police.

Don't try to do their job.

Just do yours and look after your household.

Meet the Neighbors

Some people don't know anything except maybe the names of the people who live in the next apartment or house nearest to theirs.

A lot of people have become used to that and say they really prefer it.

But, they are missing one of the most important connections we can make in our daily lives.

We don't have to live in each other's faces but knowing a little about each other can be an extra, strong and reliable form of security at no cost and little inconvenience.

My parents never had any problem with the kids or even the dog visiting next door.

That's not as common these days (especially for pets), but having some sort of connection can make everyone a little safer and, who knows, you might even develop some new friendships.

The connections you have through social and business groups in your area can also be useful for learning about problems which may start to appear in your area and how people are handling them.

Details

Many of the suggestions in this book are small, but each one could help avoid an incident or ensure a better outcome.

As you check the set-up you currently have and start to be more observant about people and events in the streets you go through, you will become more confident and competent.

Resources

U.S.A.

WebMD Advice to protect your home

Help protect your home from break-ins with these home security tips for alarms, lights, and locks.

I wondered why WebMD covered this, but they probably want to help you avoid the mental stress which follows any burglary or other intrusion.

<http://www.webmd.com/women/home-health-and-safety-9/protecting-your-home-from-break-ins>

Crime Prevention Tips

The Minneapolis Police site offers information which may help you in your area. Some parts are specific to their city.

<http://www.minneapolismn.gov/police/crimeprevention/>

Home Fire Prevention and Safety

http://www.usfa.fema.gov/citizens/home_fire_prev/

extensive resources with information for all members of the household.

U.K.

Metropolitan Police Operation Bumblebee Burglary Advice

http://www.met.police.uk/crimeprevention/docs/bumblebee_burglary_prevention.pdf

Downloadable document with advice about reducing risk of burglary and what people in the U.K. are advised to do if burgled.

This may have value for people in other locations but you should also ask local authorities for suggestions which are most suitable for your location.

Keep Alert, not Alarmed

Thanks for getting my book.

Now, please make sure you read it and use the advice you find appropriate to help keep your family and keep your property safe.

Remember that this task never ends.

You can relax but never feel that you are so secure, so you can ease off completely.

I hope you are never the victim of malicious intrusion of any kind.

But, you now are better prepared for dealing with the risks because you can reduce those risks.

Arthur Cavendish

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