



# GET SMART ABOUT HOME SECURITY

Learn burglary prevention tactics that work  
By Bruce Mungiguerra and Mitch Clarke, Monitronics





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## The best security measures since the moat

*If there's a golden rule of crime prevention, it's this: Make yourself a difficult target.*

It's not necessary to have the most secure home in the city, just on the block.

Criminals are looking for quick, easy scores, not challenges. Unlike the sophisticated criminals who are often portrayed in the movies, most robberies don't involve complicated maneuvers. They are quick break-and-enter jobs in which the items taken are portable and untraceable, like iPods, Xbox, jewelry, musical instruments, and other items that are easily pawned.

The worst part of a burglary is not usually even those items that are taken—it's the feeling that your safety has been violated, that someone unknown and unwelcome invaded your personal space.

Fortunately, by following the home security tips listed in this white paper, you can often make your home unattractive to burglars and send them looking for an easier opportunity. That's what the home security experts at Monitronics are all about—you and your safety.

# 1.35 million

residential burglaries in 2008, up 5.1% from the year before (FBI)

# 14.5 seconds

according to the FBI, how often a burglary takes place

# 63%

of burglaries take place during the day





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## Tip #1 Install a Home Security System

The best defense is an offense and a monitored security system makes your home two to three times less likely to be broken into than houses without systems. According to the FBI, one in every four homes nationwide will be burglarized over the next three years. You want the protection that comes from 24/7 monitoring.

With the advances in wireless home security technology, even houses that were not pre-wired for home security systems can easily have one installed. Your options are wide ranging and at all price points. You should consider getting a system with two-way voice, a feature on the alarm panel that allows you to talk directly to a central station agent during an emergency without picking up the phone. This also allows the operator to communicate to police the details of the situation, which can improve their response.

But even the best alarm system is no good if you don't arm it. Get into the habit of turning it on when you're away and when you're home.

## How to Choose a Security Company

There are loads of security companies out there clamoring for your business. How do you cut through the clutter and find the best fit and price? Here's a checklist for how to pick a security company and a bit about how Monitronics measures up.

### Security

You want to know that your company is watching your premises at all times. Is the monitoring central station 24/7? Are they Five-Diamond Certified? We are both.

### Response

How fast can the company respond to your alarm? Every second matters in an emergency. In 2009, our average response time was 22.1 seconds.

### Trust

Who are you letting in your door? Are they well-trained and vetted? Our Monitronics authorized dealers go through background checks and are experts at security assessments and installations.

### Guarantee

What happens if you have a problem with your system down the road? What's the policy on fixing it? Monitronics' lifetime service guarantee is great insurance. Generally speaking, it covers the parts and labor on your system with a reasonable deductible for any service request.

### Convenience

With an online MyMonitronics account, you can pay your bill, update emergency contacts, test your system, and more.

### Portability

Will your company relocate your home alarm system? We will!





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## Tip #2 Lock Doors and Windows Whether You're Away or Home

About 30% of all home robberies are classified as “unlawful entries,” which means that the thieves enter the house through an unlocked door or window and don't have to use force in order to break-in. Could that be your house?

Letting your guard down is a slippery slope—at first, you don't lock the garage door. Then you stop checking the upstairs windows. Next thing you know, you're leaving the front door open on weekends for ease-of-entry. But you're not the only one who'll be able to slip in and out quickly.

Don't go down that path at all. Make it a habit to secure all doors and windows every time you leave the premise and when you're at home. It's a smart thing to do.

A couple of areas deserve special attention. First, sliding glass doors. You need to get a “dummy bar” that wedges the door shut—one that locks is even better. Also, be sure to lock the door that leads into the garage. We've heard lots of stories of criminals breaking into cars parked out front, using the garage door opener, and gaining entry to the house that way. You want to provide another layer of protection by making sure that door is secured.

A criminal can slip in and out with remarkable speed and rob you of your possessions and your sense of security. Don't give them an easy time.

## Sign Up For Safety

Most folks don't realize it, but one of the most effective crime deterrents is a little piece of metal. A Monitronics yard sign let's criminals know that your home or business is protected 24/7 by our award-winning Central Station.

Some people buy fake signs on the Internet, hoping for some protection that way, but bad guys visit the same sites you do and know which signs are real and which ones are pseudo. Monitronics has been around for 15 years and is a known player in the industry. Our signs mean business.

Criminals look for easy marks and your monitored alarm system lets them know your place is off limits. To get the most out of your yard sign, remember these things:

1. Replace old signs with new, highly visible ones.
2. The effectiveness of the security yard sign depends on its placement: put it next to your front door, the curb next to the driveway, a flower bed, or by the garage door.
3. Get some Monitronics security stickers and place them on windows and other doors around the premises.





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## PTip #3 – Alert Neighbors When You’re Away

Multiple newspapers in the yards, a mailbox overflowing with mail, even the unanticipated advertising door hanger that’s placed on your door—all these can serve as signals to criminals that you’re away from home. Arranging for someone to monitor these services and pick up the papers, mail, and advertising flyers can help your house maintain that “lived-in” look that will cause criminals to keep searching for a better target.

A neighbor who knows you’re out of town will also know that you won’t be receiving any “deliveries” from thieves posing as moving or home maintenance companies. If they are in-the-know, they can report any suspicious activity to the police.

## Good Neighbors Make Good Security

Experts tell us that while a monitored security system is a powerful defense against crimes like burglary and home invasion, we should never underestimate the value of getting to know our neighbors.

First, there’s the familiarity factor. If everyone in the neighborhood knows who their neighbors are, they’re more likely to know who doesn’t belong, what looks fishy, and who to contact when there’s something suspicious. A moving truck in the Washington’s driveway could mean a job transfer to another city, or a robbery in progress. An informed neighbor would know.

Second, there’s a sense of accountability that comes from knowing who lives nearby. You start to care because there’s a name with a face. Sometimes, we get so isolated in our houses that flames would have to be shooting out of a neighbor’s windows before we might think of calling the fire department. But if you know Bob and Janet live there, you’re likely to make that call much earlier.

Third, good neighbors help each other out. Going on a weekend trip? Ask them to watch the house and pick up the newspaper. You can do the same for them in the future.

Almost all of us have a list of excuses for not knowing our neighbors: we’re busy, they work different hours, their teenage son looks weird...None of them are very good. It only takes a few minutes to introduce yourself and say hello from time to time. The security payoff could be big and it’s just a nice thing to do.





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## Tip #4

### Use Interior and Exterior Lights

Though 63.6% of home robberies occur during the daytime, there's also a risk at night. One easy, inexpensive tool is a light timer. This little gadget turns a lamp on and off when you want, giving the appearance of activity in your home. That can confuse a thief who may be casing the neighborhood, looking for vacant houses. At your local hardware or home improvement store, you can pick up timers that range from simple designs that turn the lights on and off at pre-set times to fancy models that will learn your lighting habits and mimic them when you're away.

Another tip is to illuminate hidden or darkened areas where criminals might hide or gain entry to your home. You might consider motion activated lights, which both light those areas and draw attention to someone who may be prowling around your property.

## Prevent home invasions

The same safety measures you take to prevent a robbery can generally be used to prevent a home invasion, one of the scarier prospects in the world of crime. Home invasion involves criminals burglarizing an occupied dwelling and often committing a crime (such as robbery, assault, rape or murder) against the occupant. Law enforcement started seeing more of this kind of crime in 1995 and it continues today.

The first line of defense against home invasion you—prevention works best. Police authorities estimate that 90% of all home invasions are preventable. Keep doors and windows locked and always look through the peep hole before opening the door. If you don't know the person, don't open it. Educate the whole family about safety precautions.

But some home invaders don't ask—they try to kick in a door or break a window. This is where you want to have a solid core door, reliable locks with reinforced strike plates, and reinforced window devices, like upper track screw locks. This will give you extra time to call the police as a person attempts to gain entry.

## Home invasion security steps

- » Install and use a monitored security system when you are home
- » Keep all doors and windows locked—even the garage door
- » Never make it obvious that you're home alone
- » Have a solid-core door for all entrance points and install heavy-duty locks with strike plates and three-inch screws
- » Identify visitors through the peep hole before opening the door—don't open it with only a chain latch for protection
- » Call the police if the stranger acts suspicious
- » Have a family meeting to go over home security plans
- » Use motion sensor lights near or around key entry points





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## Tip #5

### Remove the Cover for Burglars

Not so long ago in Scotland, two thieves tunneled into a retail store from the street outside. How did no one see this? They'd propped a mattress up against the wall. The mattress both concealed them from passersby and muffled the sound of them digging through a wall.

While most people don't have mattresses propped up against the exterior walls—and most criminals would never tunnel through a wall!—they do have other types of cover on their property. Think overgrown trees, bushes, shrubs, trellises, and sheds, all of which can provide burglars with the necessary camouflage to saddle up to a window or door and gain entry without being noticed.

# 22.1 seconds

The Monitronics average response time to an alarm event in 2009, one of the fastest in the industry

# 3X

Wireless monitored alarm systems make a home three times less likely to be burglarized (FBI)

# 21.2%

of the estimated number of property crimes committed in 2005 were burglaries

# \$1,725

the average dollar loss per burglary offense in 2005





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## About Monitronics

Monitronics is a private company with more than 16 years of experience protecting homes and businesses with our award-winning alarm monitoring services. More than 700,000 people trust us to protect what matters to them.

Headquartered in Dallas, Texas, Monitronics is one of the nation's largest, fastest-growing home security alarm monitoring companies. We provide reliable, uninterrupted security monitoring service.

Monitronics is a recognized industry leader. Our Central Alarm Monitoring Station is Five-Diamond Certified for five years in a row—one of fewer than 100 in the nation—and we were named 2008 Provider of the Year by Frost & Sullivan. We were even named by Inc. 500 a Fastest Growing Company an award-winning seven years in a row—we're in their Hall of Fame for it.

From our humble beginnings to our present strength, we have been leading the industry in innovation. We were among the first to utilize two-way voice alarm monitoring and we continue to be a principal in that alarm application with almost 250,000 customers using it. Integrated fire and carbon monoxide protection sync flawlessly with many of our systems. Our new video monitoring through Alarm.com has iPhone and BlackBerry applications so that customers can look in on their space in real time. We continuously investigate cutting-edge services that position us as innovators.

Most of all, Monitronics is stable and growing. We offer unprecedented opportunities for dealers, customers, and employees. Experience the advantage with Monitronics.

## About the Authors

### MITCH CLARKE

Mitch Clarke is the Vice President of Marketing for Monitronics. His expertise in residential security ranges from innovative technology applications to practical smarts on securing a premise. He has particular interest in leading-edge ideas that are moving the industry forward.

### BRUCE MUNGIGUERRA

Bruce Mungiguerra is the Vice President of Field Service of Monitronics. In this capacity, he directs the distribution of field service work for over 700,000 customers, which has made him expert on securing premises from intrusion. He has more than a decade of experience in the security industry.

### MEDIA CONTACT

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