



## **Dealing with Uninvited Guests: A Preparedness Plan for Home Invasion**

*By Carolyn Nicolaysen · July 10, 2018*

We have all seen movies and television shows portraying home burglaries that filled us with horror. The idea of someone coming into our home while a family member is home is terrifying. Fortunately most burglars are looking to steal your belongings, not harm you. They want to get in and out quickly and unnoticed. Summer means many families vacation, leaving vacant homes, but what if your home is not vacant?

It is terrifying to wake up in the middle of the night and realize someone is in your home. It is just as terrifying to hear someone in your home during the day, yes many thefts occur during the day. Always have a contingency plan that is well thought out. It's okay to walk around the house and create scenarios. It's not being paranoid, it's being prepared. Teach your children to do the same and walk thru scenarios with them.

### **Make a plan**

Hold a Family Home Evening and plan together. Be sure to begin your meeting with a discussion assuring your children that you plan for many things that you hope will never happen. You plan for the flu hoping it will not happen but grateful for the thermometer and medications when it does. Remind them of God's promise: "if ye are prepared ye shall not fear" D&C 38:30.

There is no right or wrong strategy for a plan. If you can safely escape and get help, do it. Can you climb out a window? You may need to purchase a fire ladder to escape the second floor. If you plan to flee choose a meeting place as you would for a house fire. Be sure to tell the neighbor they are the meeting place and make them aware they may be awakened in the middle of the night. If someone is home alone the plan is the same, leave if it is safe to do so, go to the meeting place and call authorities.

If you cannot safely flee don't make a sound. Yelling gives away your location and will allow the burglar to find you faster. Remember you don't know why he or they are there. They may be seeking money for drugs in which case they may be high and you cannot expect rational behavior from them. They may be there for a family member. Sex trafficking is increasing and children are often trapped thru social media and go voluntarily or are kidnapped after being vetted. Be quiet.

# Totally Ready

*Prepped when it really counts* ⚡

## Sheltering in Place

If there is time get to a safe place. A safe room is the best options. Safe rooms do not need to be concrete bunkers, but can be a closet or interior bathroom with a sturdy door that *opens out* so it can't be quickly kicked or pushed in. Install a deadbolt lock on the inside of the door. If you haven't prepared a safe room or don't have a room with a door that *opens out*, gather your family in a room with a door that *opens in*, lock the door and barricade it with furniture and other heavy objects.

Once you are safely barricaded or locked, in call the police and do not leave your safe place until the police arrive.

## Call for help

Call 911 immediately. Program your phone so you don't have to fumble around trying to punch in numbers. Try to be calm and give the operator the information they request. Begin by telling them why you are calling and your address. Review the Meridian article: **Calling 911** as a family. After giving all the information requested be quiet, but do not hang up. You do not want to give away your location and the operator will continue to keep you informed as help is dispatched and arrives. They will also confirm it is the first responders calling for you and not the intruder when they arrive. Do not leave your safe place until the police tell you it is safe. The police will want to make sure all burglars are apprehended or have fled and there are none hiding in the house.

## Car Keys

In addition to your cell phone take your car keys in to your safe area. This is another reason we advise everyone to keep car keys next to their bed at night. Press the panic button on your car keys. Many burglars will flee at the sound of a car alarm as neighbors are likely to wake up and investigate.

## During the day

More and more burglaries are taking place during the day. Typically a burglar or team of invaders will knock on the door. Many times while you are answering the front door another person will enter the back door. Whenever you are home keep doors locked. Never leave your garage door open. If the doorbell rings yell, "I'll get it" before answering. This will give the impression there are several people at home. Do this even when there is more than one person home. Keep the intruder guessing.

## Encountering the Intruder

Unless you are trained don't grab a weapon. This includes firearms and pepper spray. They sound like a good idea but you never know how a burglar will react or if they are armed. If you do grab a gun be sure to tell the 911 operator you are armed or the police may mistake you for the intruder.

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Do not argue with an intruder. Speak in a calm manner and cooperate. It is better to turn over your valuables than to be injured.

Avoid direct eye contact. The intruder may interpret this as aggressive and worry that you'll be able to identify him later. Never become aggressive unless you believe that you are in a life-threatening situation. Escape is the better option.

If you decide to or are forced to fight, wait for an opportunity when the intruder lets down his guard. Use a hard object or your elbow to strike his eyes or throat as fast and hard as you can. They are the most vulnerable. Don't worry about inflicting injury. Run as soon as he's stunned and yell to attract attention. Yelling fire will attract more attention than yelling help.

Home invasion robberies are a small but growing trend. These are carried out by thieves who try to intimidate home owners into divulging safe combinations, bank ATM numbers, and handing over credit cards, jewelry and cash. This is another reason to keep doors locked and to teach children never to open doors. A child can yell, "ok dad" and then "My dad is on the phone so come back later". A child should then call 911.

## **Prepare ahead**

Install a burglar alarm. Create a distress code with your burglar-alarm company. If you are being held by an intruder and your alarm has been triggered, you can signal you are in trouble when the alarm company calls to verify a break in. Your signal might be, "I'll have Dan call you in an hour" or anything else generic but one that makes sense. Better yet, don't pick up the call, the company will send the police. Make sure your alarm is not installed near a door or window where someone on the outside can see if it's set or not. Assign a family member to set the alarm each night.

Preparation begins with strong doors. Most break-ins occur through the front (34%) or back door (22%). Install steel-covered solid wood doors that are at least 1.75 inches thick. Make sure the door jam is steel as well. If you can't afford to make a change install a longer dead bolt. Any glass doors should be made of unbreakable glass.

Install motion lights around the house. If these come on begin turning on inside lights signaling that someone is home.

Keep your cell phone and car keys with you at night and within easy reach while you sleep.

Before opening the door demand identification from anyone (utility worker, repair workers) who comes to your door.

If someone comes to your door needing help, tell them you'll call 911 for them. Do not open the door.

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If you live alone, create the impression there are others in the home. Leave work boots on the porch, place a beware of dog sign on outside doors and on the gate, leave a message on your phone such as, “this is the Smiths, we’ll call you back” or have a male friend or member of the family record the message.

Plant large rose bushes or other thorny bushes around first floor windows.

If you don’t have an alarm, hang a bell on your door.

Place alarm company stickers on windows or doors even if you don’t have an alarm.

Keep windows locked. Check often to be sure no one has unlocked them.

Put an inexpensive dowel on the track of sliding glass doors and older casement windows to help prevent them from being opened. You can also drill a hole in the casement at a level so the window can be open but not enough for someone to crawl in. Place a large nail in the hole at night so the window can’t be opened. Remove the nail to open the window.

Remember, everyone’s safety plan looks a little bit different. There is no right or wrong and you know best the capabilities of family members. The important thing is to have a plan, make sure the family knows it, and most importantly practice it!

***Stay on track and help others or ask advice by visiting Carolyn’s [facebook page](#). As always there are many self-reliance tips there to help you stay on track.***