

THE DENVER CENTER FOR CRIME VICTIMS

CRIME-PROOFING DOORS, LOCKS AND WINDOWS

DOORS – Burglars commonly get in through the rear door of a house, where they are less likely to be seen. In most cases, they don't bother to pick the lock. Instead, they try to kick the door in. The strike plate—the metal plate in the doorjamb that receives the lock's bolt—is the weakest part of the frame and the most likely to give way.

What to do: Make doors crime resistant. Reinforce your door by installing a heavy-duty strike plate. Secure it with 3½-inch screws to the wall stud behind the frame.

Outside doors should be solid, not hollow, and made of wood or metal at least 1¾ inches thick. Install a wide-angle lens view (peephole) in all outside doors and always use it before opening the door.

Doors should fit tightly in their frames—a gap as small as an eighth of an inch can be pried open with a crowbar.

Replace glass panes on or near doors with shatterproof polycarbonate, available from many large hardware stores, lumberyards and glass stores.

Sliding doors are a special challenge, since they can be jimmied, or pried open. Secure them by adding an extra lock. And for further protection, place a Charlie bar (available from hardware stores) between the door frame and the point where the sliding doors meet. This will jam the door in case someone tries to open it. You can insert a broomstick in the door's track.

LOCKS – Door chains simply attach to the moldings and can be kicked off or cut with wire cutters.

What to do: Each outside door should have a dead bolt with a one-inch “throw”—meaning that the lock's bolt extends at least one inch from the edge of the door.

WINDOWS – Ground-floor windows are another common entry point. Burglars usually smash the glass, then unlock the windows, raise it, and climb in.

What to do: You can make it more difficult for criminals to get in by securing your windows with a key lock designed for windows. Or drill a hole through the sashes where they overlap—go all the way through the top sash and three quarters through the bottom one and then insert an eyebolt or heavy nail to “pin” the sashes together. The beauty of this method is that you can remove the eyebolt from the inside in an emergency.