



**Christmas is coming, the burglars are getting fat!**

Or they could be if you don't take a few precautions to keep your property safe, so there are no disappointments on the day (and beyond!)

Make your home more secure and make it difficult for the burglar. Most burglaries are committed by opportunist thieves and in many cases they don't even have to use force - they get in through an open door or window.

Look at your home through the burglar's eyes and take a few steps to prevent yourself from becoming a victim of crime:

**Windows** - make sure all your downstairs and easily accessible upstairs windows have key operated locks fitted - and use them (particularly when going out). Even small windows, such as bathroom fan lights are vulnerable - a thief can get through any gap larger than a human head!

**Secure all doors** - if your front and back doors are not secure, then neither is your home!

Make sure the doors and frames are strong and in good condition. Fit back and front doors with a five-lever mortice deadlock - and use it! Fit all exterior doors - top and bottom - with bolts (modern UPVC doors normally have a multi-point locking system anyway)

**Lighting** - Good external lighting (either PIR or Dusk to Dawn) can deter a thief.

**Look in when you are out** - use timer switches to turn on lights, radios (on a talking station) and other appliances when you are out. It is more welcoming anyway, if you are entering the house alone. If you are going away over the holiday, get a friend or neighbour to look after your house - collect post, draw curtains etc. And you be prepared to do the same.

**Garages and Sheds** - Often full of expensive tools and bikes (newly bought at Christmas?) - Fit garage and shed doors with a strong padlock and make sure they are solid enough not to be kicked in. Consider using an audible shed alarm.

**Gates and Fences** - Check for weak spots where a thief could get in - broken fencing or back gate with a weak/no lock. Thorny hedges

around the perimeter are a good deterrent, but make sure the front of your house is visible to passers-by so that a burglar cannot work unseen.

**Postcode your property** - Marked property can deter burglars because it is harder to sell and can help the police to return it if it is found. Visible marking is best, but UV pens can be used if this is not suitable. Record serial numbers of goods and take photographs of valuable items such as jewellery etc.

**Keep valuable items out of sight** - don't leave all of those newly bought and beautifully wrapped Christmas presents on display - what a temptation for a thief! Do not leave the boxes from the new equipment you have just bought outside your home.

**Insurance** - Are you fully insured? Insurance can relieve you of the financial worry of replacing stolen goods and many companies will offer reduced premiums for people with good security and those in a **Homewatch Scheme**.

**One more thing** - This is the time of year when people tend to carry more cash around with them. Please be aware of your surroundings, particularly when accessing ATM machines or paying for goods - you never know who may be watching!!

**Have a Happy and Safe Christmas and New Year!!**

If you need any extra security advice contact your local Police Crime Reduction Advisor, Lynne Lees on 01244 613862.