

OUTBUILDING AND HOME BREAKS IN THE RURAL AREA.

In the winter months we tend to visit our sheds and outbuildings less and so we would like to take the opportunity to advise all to check your security of them and also check that everything is present and in order. You can also look at what you can improve to avoid becoming a victim of burglary yourself.

Simple things can sometimes make all the difference and the more of a hassle it is to access your shed, the less attractive it becomes to the potential thief. Consider adding to the standard lock with a good secondary lock and replacing standard hinges with strap hinges secured by coach bolts or use security screws on existing hinges. Consider the value of what you keep in sheds and isolated outbuildings and avoid high value items being kept in such places where possible. When ensuring the door to your property is to a good secure standard please don't bypass the rest of the building in your consideration. Check for other insecure or weak points such as windows or easily accessed roofs.

Most burglaries are committed by opportunist thieves. In one quarter of all burglaries committed they don't even have to use force - they get in through an open door or window. Take simple precautions such as locking windows and doors when you go out even if just stepping next door or out in the garden. Also use a light timer and do not leave your keys lying around. Look at your property through a burglar's eyes to identify places where you can add deterrents and improve security.

Here are some points to check:

- Make sure the doors and frames are strong and are in good condition.
- Fit back and front doors with a five-lever mortice deadlock - and use it.
- Glass panels on or around the door are especially vulnerable, so replace them with laminated glass.
- Fit a letterbox cage to stop someone reaching inside to open your night latch lock.
- Check that the door hinges are sturdy and secured with strong long screws. Consider using inexpensive hinge bolts which help to reinforce the hinge side of a door against the use of force.
- Fit key-operated window locks to all downstairs windows and easily accessible upstairs windows. For example those above a flat roof or by a drainpipe.
- Even small windows such as skylights or bathroom fanlights need locks - a thief can get through any gap larger than the human head.
- Remember to remove keys from locked windows and to keep them out of sight in a safe place.
- If you are replacing windows - consider laminated glass. This glass has a layer of vinyl between two sheets of glass making it difficult to break.
- As a last resort, consider fitting security grilles to vulnerable windows - many DIY shops now sell decorative wrought iron grilles.

- Intruder alarms are an effective deterrent against burglars. They provide a useful warning and limit the risk of theft and damage to your property. Surveys have consistently shown that properties are less likely to be burgled if an alarm is fitted.
- Fit a security bulk-head light to the outside of your property at the front and back.
- Use time switches to turn on lights, radios and other appliances when you're out.
- Keep keys in a locked cupboard or cabinet or, at night, take them to bed with you! Making keys safe stops an opportunist burglar having instant access to a car during a break-in.
- Never leave a spare key in a convenient hiding place such as under a door mat or in a flower pot - a thief will look there first.
- Ask a friend or trusted neighbour to hold keys for you instead. They may also be prepared to look after your home while you are away on holiday, Offer to do the same for them. This also helps you to get to know your neighbours, improving your security.
- If you've moved into a new house, consider changing the back and front door locks - other people may have keys that fit.

The Police website has more great advice on securing your property, please go on to www.avonandsomerset.police.uk and then follow - advice/property-money/burglary/.

Reporting any crime or suspicious activity to the police promptly is just as important as prevention. We, the police, rely on the members of our communities to let us know what is happening in their area. Please always report any crime to us using the 101 non-emergency number or 999 if the activity or crime is taking place. Even if you think the suspicious activity may not be much, if it has prompted your suspicions then it is probably worth us knowing about it. It could be that you hold the bit of information which is the last part of the jigsaw.

If we are kept informed all the criminal activity and suspicious incidents at the time of them happening or soonest opportunity then we are much better placed to assist in improving our community.

If you have any questions about improving your shed or house security or have any information you wish to contact your beat team with, please call 101 and ask to pass a message to a member of your beat team. Alternatively you can email any enquires or information to NENPTBANES@avonandsomerset.pnn.police.uk for the attention of the beat team and one of us will get back to you.

Many thanks,

The North Mendip Beat Team
(PC Peard 3455, PCSO Humphreys 7752 & PCSO Samways 7485)