

There have been numerous burglaries throughout EBR within the past weeks. The "M.O." is usually to knock at the front door, receiving no answer, they go to the back door and knock and ring the doorbell. Receiving no response, they kick in that rear door and enter the residence. The targets are electronics, jewelry (usually in the wife's underwear bureau drawer or closet), liquor, and prescription medications, as well as firearms.

1. Always, always, set your alarm system, even if you are going to "be gone just a minute or two".
2. Go around the house with a camera (preferably) and read off the serial numbers and keep the film/tape in another place). When recording your serial numbers, etc. with a camera, state on camera where, when and how much you paid for the item. Your heirs will also appreciate it. Keep this tape at your office or some other off-site location in case of fire or other catastrophic loss. I cannot stress the number of items in evidence vaults that cannot be returned because the victims failed to record these numbers and these victims were only going to be gone "a minute".
3. Your doors are only as strong as the casings. With a screwdriver, withdraw the screws that hold the locks. They are only 1/2 to 3/4 of an inch long. Take them out and replace with 2-3" screws that will penetrate into the 2X4 that encases that opening. It only takes a few minutes and costs pennies. Although nothing will deter a determined thief, it will make it harder for them and cost them time which is their enemy. I spent 14 years in Narcotics Enforcement and you would be surprised at how a well placed kick could shatter ANY door. Only a mobile home/trailer door presented a challenge because it opened outward.
4. Talk to your neighbors. Tell them when you are going to be gone and reciprocate. Do not leave newspapers or garbage cans in your driveway. Either stop deliveries or ask your neighbor to pick them up.
5. If you see something suspicious, call the Sheriff's Office at 389-5000. If it is a false alarm, SO WHAT! You would rather get those deputies to know where you live and what you are concerned about than have them come unnecessarily! I have been there and I know how they respond.
6. If you see something that is "NR" (Not Right), he/she would rather that than work a major burglary or such a thing as a murder/rape, etc. **DO NOT confront a suspicious person.** Call the cops! If everyone calls (right or wrong) patrol personnel will stay in the area "just in case".
7. I spent 32 years chasing these guys and they are workmen, transients, and (unfortunately) our neighbors. **Burglary is a crime of opportunity.** If you do not have an alarm system, either get one or give the appearance of one. You can go to the local Radio Shack and purchase a "blank" electrical plate - the size of a switch cover plate or outlet plate. Many of these are painted with a weatherproof coating. Buy a small "LED" light or two (color doesn't really matter), (9 volt). Drill holes in the center to match the LED lights. Connect these lights to a 9 volt battery (the small type that is used for smoke detectors. These batteries will last a year or more and make the lights glow. Also purchase a circular type key housing. Mount this plate (with the LED lights and circular key) near your rear and/or back door. It gives the appearance of a security system - the types used for commercial establishments. If you know someone who has some extra actual security system decals, mount these near your main doors also. It even fools realtors (I know from experience.) You want to do anything to discourage the bad guys. Some homes construction may prevent or be a challenge to install but it could be well worth it.
8. Go to the local hardware/home improvement center and buy two or more "Bad Dog" or "Beware of Dog" signs. Mount (using screws) these signs on your fence gate.

9. Limit access to your back yard. Get a gate. Build one or buy one. If you build one, the use of it will be cumbersome and you will not get into the habit of using it, because closing a manual gate will become a chore. An automatic gate is the best because you will use it when getting out of your car.
10. Make your house looks inhabited. Leave a radio (talk radio) on and lights with a timer. Communicate with your neighbors that you will be gone.
11. Use motion sensitive outdoor lights. You can easily replace your existing flood lights with these devices and besides being very convenient if you arrive at home after dark, it will put any bad guys on notice when they are suddenly lighted up upon approaching your house.
12. If you buy a new TV, do not put the empty box out on the street. Look at your house as a criminal would. They do.
13. Do not think having a gun will protect you. Having a firearm and being prepared to use it are two very different things. Not being prepared to use it will only furnish the "bad guy" with another tool. Taking a human life is a giant leap. If you are not prepared to go to that step, arm yourself with pepper spray or some other such non-lethal means. But - if walking or entering a threatening situation, have it in your hand with your finger on the trigger!
14. Do not walk as exercise with earphones! Walk with your newly-made friends, your neighbors. Look around. Be aware of your surroundings. Get to know what is normal and what is not.
15. Please do not confront trespassers, etc. They could be very dangerous. Call the Sheriff's Office. If in doubt, call 389-5000. (I don't know about you but I pay a good bit of property taxes = Sheriff's income). If they (the Sheriff's Office) get tired of you calling, they will have someone close to answer (just in case).
16. What number to call? 389-5000 goes to the switchboard (during office hours) whereas 389-5073 goes directly to communications which dispatches the units. **This is only in a NON-EMERGENCY call.**

If it is an emergency, you are entirely correct in calling 911. The 911 operator asks "what is the nature of your emergency". If it is a fire, the operator directs the call to the fire department, if it is a criminal, matter, the call goes to the appropriate law enforcement agency. Any built-in delay in directing the call is unavoidable as a lot of 911 calls are informational or just plain stupid. It is a judgment call on your part. Most calls, to whatever number, are logged and the caller information is displayed on the computer screen.

For further information to those family members who are concerned, there are (special) listed numbers for those who are hearing impaired and have the correct equipment.