

It's Alarming



From the
Desk of
Lieutenant
Tracey
Miller

Spring Time Safety Tips

Springtime is right around the corner, which means warmer, enjoyable weather is soon to come. During this time of year, we find ourselves outside more often doing yard work, watching the kids play ball or just hanging out with friends and family. Our spring temperatures usually mean more people have their windows and doors open taking pleasure in the fresh air and dreading the day they have to turn on the air conditioner.

Enjoying the weather does not mean you need to sacrifice your home safety. I want to discuss with you some safety tips that will allow you to enjoy spring temperatures while still keeping your family and home safe.

Let's begin with your garage. You should never keep your garage door open for long periods of time, especially if you are not outside to monitor what is occurring. Too often, criminals drive through neighborhoods looking for open garage doors with no one around. All they have to do is walk up, take your golf clubs, lawn mower, bicycle, etc., and drive away. It only takes seconds for your property to become theirs. Keep your garage door closed and always keep the door between your garage and your home locked. If it only takes seconds for a

thief to steal your property inside your garage, how long do you think it takes to steal what they want from inside your house? Keep your family safe by keeping the go-between door locked.

If you are one of those people who like having the windows and screen doors open, take some precautions. Similar to the garage door theory, do not leave your windows and doors open if you are not going to be home, not even a little bit! An open window or door to an empty home is an invitation to a burglar. If you leave your house, even for a short time, ensure all the windows and doors are closed and locked. If you want to leave your windows open while you sleep, it is best to close those windows on the opposite side of the house from where you are. If no one is in those rooms, close and lock the windows so no one breaks in while you and your family are sleeping.

Walk around and observe the plants and shrubs around your house. Are they over grown? Can they easily conceal someone hiding in them? Do they block your front door? If you answered yes to one or more of these questions, you should consider trimming them, or removing them. Remember, it's spring time and a time for new beginnings. Trim the plants, cut down the hedges or maybe remove some of the shrubs that could aid a burglar.

Keep you and your family safe this spring, and throughout the rest of the year, by taking a few extra precautions around the house. Pass these tips on to your family and friends and they too can enjoy the wonderful temperatures without becoming a victim. Have a great season and be safe! ■

From the
Desk of
Detective
Garcia



Selecting an Alarm System and/or Company

Security alarm systems may conjure unpleasant thoughts of alarms blaring in the middle of the night. True, that is what some security alarm systems do; however, these types of problems can be minimized if the proper care is taken and the correct approach is used.

First, establish what type of security systems offers the best compromise between your life style and peace of mind. Building design, whether a home or business, will be part of the determining factors as well as personnel or family members who will operate the alarm system.

Second, use the same care when purchasing a security alarm system as you would for the purchase of any major item such as an automobile or appliance. Keep in mind, security alarm companies are private for profit businesses. Be particular in your research and choose the company that is the best security value for your home or business. The type of equipment, the quality of the installation, and the after-sales service may well be the main differences between alarm security companies.

Third, be sure that the equipment is not too complicated. If the security alarm system is difficult to operate, it will cause false

alarms. Require the alarm company and/or individual be licensed and bonded. This is in addition to any local municipal alarm business and alarm agent licensing. The City of Phoenix provides a web site for your perusal as part of your research (www.phoenix.gov/police). Other organizations such as the Better Business Bureau, American Association of Retired Persons, Consumer Reports, the Arizona Registrar of Contractors, Arizona Corporate Commission, Security Electronic Systems Association of Arizona and the National Fire and Burglar Alarm Association are all valuable resources when researching a particular alarm company. Two or three bids are the norm when comparing alarm companies. It is not recommended to go beyond three bids, as you will invite confusion. Inspect the reputation, ethics, service backup capabilities and longevity of any security alarm company you are considering.

Lastly, insist the alarm company include training as part of the alarm service. Have the installer or other knowledgeable representative of the company "walk" you through your alarm system until you fully understand how it works. This will prevent the most common problem: FALSE ALARMS. False alarms are an indicator of the quality of the alarm installation and user education.

Remember you are altering your life style to include a security alarm system for the peace of mind and quality of life you expect. ■

QUESTION #11 ON YOUR PERMIT RENEWAL FORM

When was the last time your system was inspected? Have you done the required annual inspection on your alarm system? The annual check on your alarm system is a physical check of your system. The following is what is required

- 1.) Touch the contacts on the doors and windows to ensure they are secure and not going to fall off.
- 2.) Make sure there are no dust conditions or spider webs on or around your motion detector(s).
- 3.) Check your back-up battery. When was the last time this battery

was replaced? We suggest replacement every two to three years. ■

Trivia: When was the first alarm system invented?



From the Inspector's Desk

Are you a Responsible Person?

Responsible Persons (RP's) are the people on the call list that you provided to your alarm company. The alarm-monitoring center will attempt to contact an RP when there is an alarm activation. RP's are usually family members, neighbors, managers, loss prevention associates, or employees that you trust and want to be contacted when the alarm is tripped. Does your RP list have current contact information?

The City of Phoenix Alarm Code Section 10-70.D requires that you respond or arrange for someone to respond to the scene of an activated alarm within 30 minutes of the alarm activation. RP's should be thoroughly trained on the operation of your alarm system. It is your responsibility to train the individuals listed as RP's about your alarm system. RP's will need to have a password or code to identify them when speaking with the alarm company. They will need to have a key or access to the property.

The central station should inform the Police Department of the name of the responding RP and the estimated time of arrival; this provides important information to the responding officers. If there are other calls for service and the RP has not arrived, the officers may not remain at the alarm location.

Some residential or commercial properties have areas that are not accessible without an RP to let the police officer inside. Buildings that share common interior walls such as strip malls, center courtyards,

fenced yards and roofs are some of the areas that an officer cannot check from the perimeter of the property. Criminal activity may go undetected, because the RP did not respond to the alarm to let the officers inside. If there are no obvious signs of criminal activity visible from the officer's vantage point, and there is no RP to let the officer inside the property, the alarm event may be deemed to be a false alarm and the officer will go on to the next call.

Do your RP's know what to do if the alarm company calls them? RP's should know about conditions affecting the alarm. Are you remodeling? Are there pets or other animals inside? Do you have night deliveries or a janitor service? What if the alarm malfunctions? ■

Does your home or business have French doors?

If so, do they have stabilizing pins in the top and bottom of the door? Your French doors or double doors should not activate your alarm system when shaken. If the alarm system does activate, then you should contact your alarm company to find out what can be done to eliminate this problem. Activation of the alarm by loose doors is a false alarm. ■

Is an Initial Notice of Assessment Letter Important?

If you receive an Initial Notice of Assessment letter from the Phoenix Police Department Code Enforcement Unit, that is the time to appeal an alarm activation. You have 20 days to submit a written appeal. If you wait until you receive an invoice, it is too late. Review the Phoenix City Code on Alarm Systems Section 10-76 for appeal procedures. If you have questions when you receive an Initial Notice of Assessment letter, please contact our office at (602) 534-0322. ■

Answer: April 28, 1852 - fire alarm system

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