



Security News

Burglar and Fire detection, Video Surveillance, Access Control, Gate Automation

Protect Yourself at Home

OK, I blew it trying to be too subtle in our first quarter newsletter. I found myself trying to explain what was going on with our client base. We had a series of three very disturbing incidents in a week's time involving home intruders, gun fire, surveillance of client's homes and a visit to one of the client's place of business by a somewhat irrational person. It became apparent after the third questioner inquiring what I ***really should be saying*** is this: the next person you meet is likely having a battle of their own. Some of these people are exceptionally stressed because of the economy, their job (or lack thereof) family problems, drug and/alcohol abuse and mental illness.

People are really on edge and everyone who was a little disturbed before, is now a raving lunatic. You need to be very careful with how you handle people and understand that you may be exposed to complete strangers displaying aberrant behavior. The criminal activity rate in our communities and for our clients has skyrocketed in the past year.

The following are recommendations to consider and how to prepare if someone comes into your home. Experience has taught me that preparing both mentally and physically is critical to ensuring the best outcome possible. Additionally your family should discuss this as a possibility and what you will or will not do. Being in a "nice" area is no guarantee that you will not be targeted. Bad guys have cars and they go anywhere they want these days.

Home Invasions:

Home invasions are robberies that occur while the family is home, often in bed. They hear a pounding on the front or back door, go to investigate and either the door bursts open or the family member opens up and 2-3-4 or 5 men all pour into the house and begin terrorizing the family. The greater Seattle area (and the rest of the country) is having an epidemic with 17+ reported locally in the past 18 months.

Previously these were almost always crimes involving drugs at the victim's homes. While drugs are still involved in about 20% of home invasions the apparently innocent family is becoming more the norm. Many of these invasions include gun-fire and violent assaults within the home by the thugs in order to intimidate the residents. The intruders want the family to be home because they can force them to unlock safes, disclose pass words and PIN numbers and assist the intruders in getting more loot.

Almost every one of these crimes has had one or more intruders armed with pistols, although rifles, shotguns, clubs and knives have all been used in home invasions recently. Several home occupants have been assaulted, shot, or even killed in various ways. While a victim was tied up in a recent home invasion, one of the intruders poured what he thought was a flammable substance around the house stating that he intended to burn the house down, presumably while the victim was still unable to flee. Fortunately for the occupant the product being poured on the floors turned out to be non-flammable.

Two of our clients have had home invasions and fortunately both prevailed because they were assertive and aggressively defensive.

Defending against a home invasion:

- If someone is frantically pounding on your door at 11:30 at night or multiple men are in your flower garden at 4:30 in the morning you have an emergency! Call 911 or hit your panic button before you go any farther in investigating the disturbance. Have the 911 dispatcher on the phone when you try to find out who is at your door. If you are attacked, you'll have help coming your way immediately, not hours after you've had to deal with a life changing emergency.
- Have a big dog. Your dog will help alert you to someone attempting to gain entry and if the barking is ferocious enough, might give the intruders pause about what will happen once inside the residence.
- If you see that a home invasion is occurring it is best if you make it out of the house. You cannot be taken captive and assaulted if you're not there. Get out, get away and immediately call for help. You may save the lives of those left in the house.
- If you cannot leave, grab a cell phone and lock yourself in a bathroom with the lights off. It might buy you a few minutes to get a call in to 911. If you believe you will be taken captive hide your cell phone while it is still connected to 911. It may help the police in locating you if you don't know the address of the home where you are staying. Also, make certain your home and cell phones transmit your caller ID.
- Have doors they cannot kick in easily. All too often we find poor quality hardware on entry doors with ½ inch screws holding the strike plate into the frame and these screws shear off with one good kick. Three inch hardened screws and a deadbolt are the right hardware to make it harder to get past the door.
- Have a retreat area like a closet or bathroom with a strong bullet resistant door and walls. We

can help you with developing and installing the correct items.

- Make certain your alarm is armed. If you sleep upstairs and the intruders come in downstairs, would you hear them if the TV was on? If not, you need to have your alarm armed. Do you have glass break sensors on the ground floor? Since 70% of our intrusions now involve window smashing you should monitor the glass.
- Do you have a portable panic button at the bedside? If it is in your night stand drawer pull it out and set it on top with a cell or portable phone. Far better to have it available than to be trying to dig through a drawer in an emergency when you really, really need it. Test it sometime after calling the monitoring station. If you don't feel comfortable testing it on your own, call the office and someone will walk you through the test.

Those homeowners who were armed fared much better than those who were not. None of the armed homeowners were seriously injured in any of the reported attacks whereas others were pistol whipped, beaten with clubs or shot and killed. I'm not recommending that you go out and buy a gun but there are certain factors that benefit the homeowner when faced with multiple adversaries, (which is almost always the case in a home invasion), particularly if you are small of stature or you're a woman. If you own a weapon you need to get training on deploying it effectively, legally and in a way that keeps you out of civil court or jail. Call me and I'll refer you to the right people for training at Wades or Insights.

Jim O'Donnell

Cell-206-510-9332

Office (800) 215-6555

swidejimodonnell@aol.com