

Statewide Security

31 Years of Service

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Security News

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

Wake Up Call Burglary

We install security systems for people who often use them consistently for a while then they leave one morning forgetting to arm the alarm and when they come home everything is in its place and all is well. Hmm, they reason that there is no all-knowing burglar waiting out there for the one day they forget to turn on the alarm. Then the next day the house keepers are coming and they wouldn't want to have them set off the alarm since they don't have a user keypad code and they leave it off again. Their prior security consciousness becomes a little dim, maybe the alarm guys are just scaring them and they don't really need this electronic gizmo. The yard signs are nice, they are sure most of the burglars really believe that everywhere there is a sign that there is an armed alarm in the house or office behind it. Maybe I should just be selling yard signs over the Internet and all I'd need is someone to take orders and ship out the signs and our on-call technician wouldn't get awakened in the middle of the night each time someone's alarm is activated.

June 4, 2009 at 1:00 AM I got the wake up call that the alarm in my daughter and son-in-law's house had been activated; Jana and Brian were on vacation in Montana. The kitchen window was the first alarm transmitted and then a few minutes later an interior motion detector signal was transmitted. The Sheriff's Department was dispatched to the house. About 15 minutes later we received another round of alarm signals generated by the officers as they searched the house and then got a call from the Sheriff's Dispatch desk to get a "Responsible Party" out to the house. I spoke with the Deputy who said that the intrusion was very abnormal from his experience as none of the beds were overturned and slashed apart and all the drawers were still in their cabinets, not overturned and

their contents dumped onto the floor. Normally he would wade through piles of belongings that had been quickly searched by the intruders as they grind their way through people's hiding places because they have several hours to do so.

The only damage the officer found was that the faces of the two safes in the house had been beaten in. Both safe doors were still intact and there was no other evidence of loss. The voice speaker inside the house was still announcing "Intruder, Intruder" so the real intruder knew what he was looking for and figured that if he spent five minutes or so trying to break into the safes that he would be out of the house before the police potentially trapped him inside. He left a little blood on the safe door so perhaps he cut himself coming through the broken window or he got careless swinging the hammer and got a hand in the way?

My daughter's alarm is similar to many installed before 2004; full door and window contacts, motion detectors, heat and smoke detectors. About 5 years ago we started seeing the trend towards window smash for entry and we've changed our tactics in response to real-world experience but I've been busy and never updated her system to have glass break sensors. We did install a Rifle Locker safe that was bolted to the wall and it performed far better than we expected. This is a convenient but low-security safe that allows people to lock up firearms or install many interior shelves and put their daily wear jewelry in them to keep out casual burglars and service people who are invited into the home to do repair or other maintenance work. The burglar could have picked up the other safe, a cube shaped fire safe, and carried it out with him but he left it, so perhaps he lives in the neighborhood, walked to the house and didn't want to be seen carrying a safe out the window in the early morning. Would that be a little suspicious to the Sheriff's Deputy if he saw him walking home with the safe?

While I wasn't negligent in the installation or maintenance of the alarm system, given the fact that over 50% of our intrusions today involve glass smashing, I should have added glass break detection to the alarm. We also run through cycles where burglars cut phone lines. If this burglar had done so no signal would have been transmitted to the monitoring center and he could have had hours inside the house to do his misdeeds. Jana and Brian could have had a significant loss; instead they only had to replace the window glass and the two safes, since the opening handles had been destroyed. Brian ultimately had to cut open the cube safe to gain access to the contents.

What I did to better protect Jana and Brian's house was this:

1. I updated their alarm system with a cell phone backup. This is a dedicated cell phone that will switch to the cell for a call to the monitoring station if the phone line is cut. It is pretty hard to suppress or jam a cell call.
2. I added in glass break detection to several likely locations that are vulnerable to window smash.
3. I installed a door contact on the outside under-house crawl space access door, glass break sensor and a door contact on an unattached storage building and I added a motion detector in the master bedroom.
4. I installed five day/night cameras, some with built in infrared illuminators to allow night time viewing even in areas of total blackness, and a digital video recorder that the monitoring station can connect to view the outside of the house in the event that another burglary occurs while they are gone. I installed a backup battery system for the cameras, the infrared lights and the DVR.
5. I added contacts to a shed that had been placed on the property since the original alarm installation.

The point here is that this burglary could have had a much different outcome. Had the alarm not functioned correctly, Jana and Brian's house could have been trashed or been burned down to cover the evidence of the intrusion.

We need a little wake up call occasionally to remind us that constant vigilance is the price of freedom and that "Bad Guys" really are out there lurking, looking for

opportunities. Maybe you've been lucky when you didn't turn on your alarm. Maybe your system was installed before intrusion methods changed and your system has no glass break protection and no carbon monoxide detection. Perhaps your asset mix in your building has ballooned beyond the original intent of the base security system to cover.

We do free security evaluations for our clients. Would you like me to do a walk-through and recommend improvements that you can do on your own? Make the call now; it's definitely better than getting a call at 1:15 AM from me telling you that your home or office has been burglarized.

Jim O'Donnell
cell: 206-510-9332
office: 800-215-6555
swidejimodonnell@aol.com

***Brian cut open
his damaged
fire safe with
this cordless
Sawzall in four
minutes.***



***This safe took
Brian 15 minutes to
destructively open.***