

Just How Secure is Your Home?

Home security is an important issue, even for those who are not preppers. Nobody wants to have their home broken into and especially not while they are inside. The dangers that go with having your home invaded by strangers who wish to do you harm, is something that cannot be ignored. But just how secure is your home from such an invasion? Worse than that, just how secure is it in the event of a disaster, when desperate people will be doing desperate things to get the food and other supplies they need?

We've all heard the standard advice out there, about how to secure our homes. Sadly, much of that advice is lacking in practical testing. The things that people say are more about deterring a criminal, than they are about stopping one. Detering has its place; but it won't stop the determined criminal.



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Just what do I mean by deterring? It's the idea of making your house difficult enough to break into, that the crooks decide to look elsewhere, where they won't have to work so hard. Actually, in the modern context, it's more about making your home hard to break into, without making noise. Criminal don't want to attract attention that could result in a call to 9-1-1. They are also lazy people, which is why they've chosen a life of crime. They'd rather take what's yours, than work to earn the money to buy it for themselves. Most think that they're smarter than everyone else, finding a way to "beat the system." Yeah, right.

One of the reasons why deterrence works so well, is that there's always a house where there's less chance of them getting caught; where doors and windows are left unlocked; where the people have left on a trip and advertised that on social media, or where there's more to be gained by breaking in. Those are generally better targets, so all you really need to do is convince them that your home is too much trouble.

But deterrence is only good to a point. If what you have is valuable enough or they have a personal reason to try and get back at you, it takes more severe deterrents to deter them than otherwise. Both of those are variable terms too. How valuable something is and how much they want to get back at you can and will change with the circumstances. If we're talking a post-disaster scenario, that food you have stockpiled is a powerful motivator to overcome any deterrence the security measures you've put in place provides.

That's why deterrence isn't enough. If all your home security does is provide deterrence, then it's just good enough for normal times, when the thief will see those measures as a reason to look elsewhere. But that's not the same as dealing with those desperate people. When it comes to them, your home security needs to stop them in their tracks, even when they put forth considerably effort to defeat your security and get into your home.

How Easy is it to Break In?

If we take out the deterrence factor of attracting attention and getting arrested, what keeps criminals out of your home? Not much. The primary entryways that criminals use, doors and windows, are woefully inadequate to keep them out. Locks, which we all use, serve nothing more than to keep the honest people honest. Anyone who wants to can easily defeat any lock you can put on a home.

The deadbolt locks that we put on our door are "rated" to

withstand a lot of abuse. That's not surprising, considering that the bolt part of that deadbolt is usually one inch diameter steel. It would take somewhere between 56,000 to 91,000 pounds of force to break through that bolt.

But what about the doorframe? That deadbolt is going into a thin piece of metal, attached to a $\frac{3}{4}$ " thick piece of pine. The hole for the deadbolt to go through is usually only about $\frac{3}{4}$ " away from the edge of that board, or less. So, the entire security of that door is dependent on a $\frac{3}{4}$ " x $\frac{3}{4}$ " piece of pine. I'm not sure just how many pounds of force it would take to break that stick of wood, but I know I can do it without a whole lot of effort. It doesn't matter at all how good that deadbolt is, as long as it is going into a simple wooden doorframe.

Windows are even worse than that. If you have rocks or gravel as part of your landscaping, you've provided potential criminals with a ready supply of ammunition to use in breaking through your windows. Since it is only the noise that is acting as a deterrent, once the need to avoid attracting attention is removed, then those windows aren't going to do a thing to keep your home and family safe.

Don't think you're safe if you don't have rock in your landscaping, there are plenty of other places where those criminals can find things to break your windows with. After all, they're just glass and it doesn't take much to break glass. If you have a garden shed in the backyard, they can probably find all kinds of things that will break those windows.

We've Got to Do Something

There are a lot of preppers who have the attitude that all they need for their home's security is their guns. I've got my own collection of guns too, as well as plenty of ammo for them; but I'm not just counting on those guns to keep me and

my family safe. I expect my home to do its job too, keeping people out.

As I see it, the chances of dealing with only one criminal at a time are rapidly diminishing. I was recently in some training, where the police told us that most muggings and break-ins are perpetrated by teams of two or three now; not just one criminal working alone. Therefore, if my home is ever broken into, especially while I'm home, I expect to have to face off against two to three armed assailants. Those aren't very good odds.

But compared to a post-disaster scenario, that two or three assailants might seem like a walk in the park. There's just too much of a chance of hungry people gathering together in gangs, looking to loot and raid. The more of them there are, the worse the odds are for you and me.

That's why I want my home to do everything it can, to keep those people out. If I've got to deal with them, I want them coming one or two at a time, not in bunches of six to ten. I certainly don't want them surrounding me, coming in from more than one entrance at a time. That's going to require some real security.

Fortunately, there are things we can do to make our homes more secure; things which will work much better than a deadbolt running into $\frac{3}{4}$ " pine and bare glass windows.

For doors, the first thing to do is to make sure that any deadbolts we are using are going into something much more substantial than a small metal plate, backed up by $\frac{3}{4}$ " pine. That either means having a metal door frame (the best) or putting in what's known as a security striker plate, to replace the existing one. Good security striker plates are about three feet long; there are shorter ones too; but they're not much good. They should be installed with screws that are at least 3" long, so that the screws go through the door

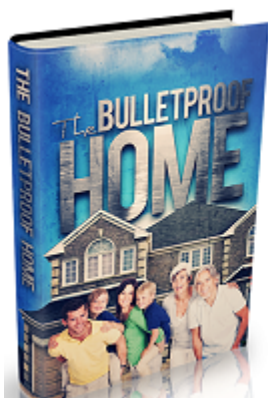
frame and into the studs behind.

That should be enough to secure the door against thieves in normal times; but it still might not be enough to secure it during a pot-disaster time, when desperate people are trying to get in. I wouldn't be surprised if those people came equipped with some sort of battering ram, if not the first time, then when they came back. For that, you'd need to be ready to bar the door.

That term probably brought up an instant image in your mind; something you'd seen in a movie, of soldiers barring the gate of a castle. That's exactly what I'm talking about. If we really want to make our doors secure, there's not much that's more secure than barring the gate like they did in medieval times.

But what about windows? Those are even harder to secure than doors, are especially considering that they are made of glass. A single bar over the window might make the opening smaller; but it sure isn't going to make it impossible to break or to shoot through.

Probably the most secure thing we can do with windows, in a time of real crisis, is to cover them with plywood, just as people do for a hurricane. That will not only help to keep people out, but will also keep them from seeing in and taking potshots at you. Unfortunately, it will also keep needed light from coming in for you to see in your home.



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Other than plywood, there are two other options to consider; putting security film on the windows or covering them with burglar bars. Obviously, the burglar bars are more secure; but they are also much more expensive and much less attractive. Window security film is much less expensive and not really visible, once installed; but it is not as secure.

The general idea of window security film is to act like the inner layer of a windshield in a car accident. It holds the pieces of glass in place, so that the window is still covered. That's not a perfect answer; but it means that they would literally have to break out the glass all the way around the perimeter of the window, in order to get it out and gain access to your home. So, it would slow down their ability to break in considerably, giving you time to react.

Don't Be Passive

These modifications to our homes, making the windows and doors harder to break into, are considered passive defenses. But passive defenses by themselves aren't really enough. A determined assailant can always find a way through them, if that's all you've got. Even a bank vault is designed and built with the idea that the police will be on their way and the vault only has to hold up long enough to keep the criminals out until the police arrive.

We need to have the same attitude. While we want our passive defenses to be as good as possible, so as to give us the maximum possible amount of time to respond. At the same time, we want to respond as quickly as possible, making a determination of how many attackers there are, where they are trying to get in at and coming up with a plan to defeat them before they can get in the home.

This is where things get a bit tricky. Under the current interpretation of the law, it is considered self-defense in most states, if they are in your home and facing you, as an

obvious threat. The law is less clear when they are outside your home. If they haven't gotten in yet, how can you say that they are a definite threat, unless they have fired shots into your house? Your lawyer will need to be sharp in creating your defense, if it comes down to that.

On the flip side of that slippery coin, if you are outnumbered by assailants and they have shown hostile intent, then you are at risk, even if they are still outside your home. So, you need to keep your head, clearly identifying the level of the threat. If you can, get someone in your family to take pictures or video, showing the severity of the threat. That will help your lawyer in making your defense.

Whatever happens, remember that your job is to protect your family. Don't let it go beyond that. If you've succeeded in that goal, you've done what you need to do. You don't need to chase them down the street, nor do you need to rid the streets of those vermin. Even in a crisis, there will be some sort of law, even if it is nothing more than vigilante law.