

Home Security Tip: Deadbolt Enhancement

A frequent method of entry into homes by intruders is simply by kicking in the front door. This is surprisingly quick and relatively quiet entry. It requires no tools and no expertise. Many of these breached doors will have a locked and operating deadbolt. How does this happen?

Homes with deadbolts that are several years old or perhaps a current, but more economical model may provide a false sense of security. Often they provide little to deter a home invasion. Damage to a front door kicked in by intruders will be substantial including expense for repair and replacement of the breached door, door frame and trim. This, of course, is in addition to the feeling of violation of your personal space and loss of expensive items taken from your home. What can be done to make a door more secure?

Actually, the problem is less with the actual deadbolt and more with the way the striker plate is attached to the doorframe. With older or more economical deadbolt models the screws for attaching the striker plate to the doorframe are too short. They hold the striker plate to the doorframe more as a cosmetic covering of the hole drilled in to accept the bolt. The screws are penetrating only the doorframe that is made of soft wood. Extreme pressure from a hard kick will cause the doorframe to shatter inward taking the striker plate and short screws with it. The deadbolt is defeated and the door is now open.

However, there are steps the homeowner can take to prevent a door equipped with an older deadbolt from being kicked in. It is a simple fix and takes about ten minutes at a cost of about one dollar. Only minimum skill with tools is required to do this project. The result will be that the striker plate will be attached to the wall stud next to the doorframe by the longer screws and becomes virtually kick proof.

Inspection and Replacement

Remove one screw from the striker plate. If it is less than three inches long replace both screws with three inch screws that can be purchased at any home improvement store. Size #8 X 3" is recommended. Two replacement screws should cost about one dollar.

Caution

Run new screw threads over a bar of soap or candle for lubrication to make it easier to install without binding.

Do not attempt to install the new screws with a hand held screwdriver. The tension will be too much and your hand will tire. Also, the chance of stripping the screw head is greater than using an electric drill with a Phillips head bit.

No home is completely burglar proof from a determined intruder. Replacing the deadbolt screws however, will make your home a harder target and take more time to gain entry and increasing the risk of discovery.

Making Doors With External Hinge Pins Safer From Intruders

Many homes with a connected garage have a door between the garage and the living space of the home. Many of these doors open out into the garage and the door hinge pins are visible on the garage side of the closed door. Of course, this door can be locked from inside the house and may even have a deadbolt to increase its security from intruders. This door is a convenience for the homeowner, but if the hinge pins are exposed on the garage side of the door there is a potential problem. The locked door can be removed from the frame entirely by an intruder who then has access to the house. The deadbolt became useless. This is done by simply removing the pins from the hinges and sliding the door out of the frame beginning with the hinge side and away from the locked side. This is a simple illegal entry, but it has a simple solution. A homeowner can fix the door in such a way that the door will not slide out of the frame even after the hinge pins have been removed. The cost of the fix can run from zero to about five dollars depending on the method used.

Method one is installing a finishing nail about six inches long into the doorframe just under the face of the hinge. Leave about one quarter inch sticking out of the doorframe. Next, drill a corresponding hole into the edge of the door so that the small piece of the nail sticking out of the doorframe can enter into the hole in the door edge when the door is closed. You now have a strong nail section connecting the doorframe to the edge of the door. This is completely out of sight and unreachable when the door is closed. Now, even if the hinge pins are removed the door will not slide out of the frame. And since the door opens into the garage the would be intruder is on the wrong side of the door to attempt kicking in the door. Cost of fix is close to zero.

Another way to secure a door with the hinge pins exposed to the outside when closed is by replacing the entire hinge with a model that has a metal protrusion built into the hinge that prevents the door from being removed from the frame when it is closed just like the nail method. This type of hinge can be purchased at most home improvement stores for about three dollars per hinge.

Caution

Always keep your garage door down even when you are home. This will keep the would be intruders from entering your garage and having access to the connecting door to your home. Most of these burglars are opportunistic thieves looking for an easy prey. Don't make it easy for them by inattention or failure to take simple precaution like leaving the garage door open.