



WINDOW SECURITY

More than a third of burglars will enter your property through a window. Windows will come in a variety of designs, styles and materials which are commonly one of the following – Casement, Tilt & Turn, Sliding Sash, Fan light, Velux or Louvre. Glazing incorporated in window frames is equally varied and is usually annealed, laminated or toughened.

All will be designed to admit light, but it is important to remember that windows are a favoured entry point for thieves. You can assess their individual vulnerability, which will depend on three main factors:

The Accessibility of the Window

Ground floor windows are more vulnerable than upper floor windows. However, upper windows that can be easily reached with a climbing aid, via down pipes or from adjoining roofs are equally attractive to the burglar. Some of these windows can be protected with decorative metal grilles, but it is important to remember that any such fixing should not form an obstruction in the event of an emergency evacuation. Window accessibility and security can also be improved by fitting additional locks, limiters or stronger glazing.

The Visibility of the Window to Neighbours or Passers-by

Windows at the rear and side of premises are more susceptible to criminal attack than those which are clearly visible to others. Make full use of external lighting to illuminate the external approaches to these windows during darkness. Unnecessary visible obstruction can also be caused by overgrown trees or hedging. Overgrown branches or hedging that can restrict the natural line of sight by casual observers should be pruned.

The Quality of the Fabrication, Strength and Installation of the Window

Not all windows are the same. Good design features, quality fabrication and installation can provide a level of security far beyond the capabilities of the average burglar.

There are many different windows on the market today and all will have some security features. The quality of the products can vary considerably. Some include multi-point locking, reinforced frames, external security beading and laminated glazing, but exaggerated claims about their security can be made. With enough time and effort, any window can be forced. What you are buying in security terms should be windows of sufficient strength and quality to stop or deter the common methods used by burglars to break and enter through them. The extra time and investment you make in purchasing quality windows will pay real dividends when it comes to securing your home or business.

Windows manufactured to comply with the European Standard I.S. EN 1627:2011 or the British Security Standard for Doors & Windows PAS 24-2016 or equivalent are recommended, as these will have been subjected to specific security and burglar resistance tests. Ask your glazier or window installation company about these standards.

Many modern double-glazed windows are fitted with external beading with no security features. This beading can easily be pried away and the glass panel lifted out. The security of these windows can be improved by fitting additional security features - discuss with your local glazier / window installation company or your local Crime Prevention Officer.



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You can always improve security on older windows, however, it is always advisable to seek professional assistance before adding security locks or special glazing to existing windows to ensure any security alteration or additions will not weaken the window frame or structure. It is also advisable to talk to the fabricator or installer beforehand to ensure any warranty you may have is not compromised. Home security and DIY shops sell inexpensive, key operated locks to fit most kinds of windows. You may need more than one window lock, depending on the size of the opening you need to secure. More vulnerable windows can also be fitted with 'limiters' to restrict the size on the opening.



TYPES OF GLASS

Annealed, float or plate glass is the most common type of glass used in buildings. It breaks easily and when broken forms large sharp fragments.

Toughened glass, sometimes used as an alternative to laminated glass, is approximately 8 times stronger than plate glass. It should not be used for security purposes in windows and doors as its main value is as a safety glass. Toughened glass is designed to withstand forced blows; however, it is not impenetrable and the surface can be broken or fractured with sufficient force, usually with a sharp or pointed instrument. If the surface is punctured, the entire piece of glass will disintegrate into small granular pieces.

Laminated glass consists of two or more layers of ordinary glass bonded together with a strong material called polyvinyl butyral (PVB). It gives excellent protection against accidents, vandalism or burglary. When attacked, the glass itself may break but the glazing will adhere to the PVB bonding layer. The level of protection can be increased depending on the layers and thickness of the glass, however, in general for residential protection, a minimum thickness of 6.4mm is recommended.

Safety and security films are essentially plastic films that are applied (glued) to glass in order to improve its strength and make it more difficult to break. They work in a similar fashion to laminated glass but they differ in that films can be applied to glass after installation or manufacture, which makes them relatively easy to retrofit to existing windows.



FIRE PRECAUTIONS

Any physical changes or alterations made to windows in your home should not needlessly impede or restrict your exit in the event of a fire alert or evacuation. This will be particularly important when fitting laminated glass or where windows are controlled by key operated locks. Keys should always be kept accessible to occupants but out of reach of potential trespassers or burglars.



REMEMBER

When the home is occupied, fire safety is your priority; however, when the home is unoccupied, security is your main concern.



USEFUL CONTACTS AND LINKS

•The Garda National Crime Prevention Unit, Garda H.Q., Harcourt Square, Dublin 2.
Tel: (01) 6663669 Email: GNCPU@garda.ie An Garda Síochána www.garda.ie

•The National Standards Authority of Ireland, www.nsai.ie

•Secured by Design <https://www.securedbydesign.com/>

•The Associated Locksmiths of Ireland
<https://www.facebook.com/alofireland/>

•The Master Locksmiths Association
www.masterlocksmiths.co.uk



Crime Prevention Video

