An Garda Síochána

Crime Prevention Information Sheet
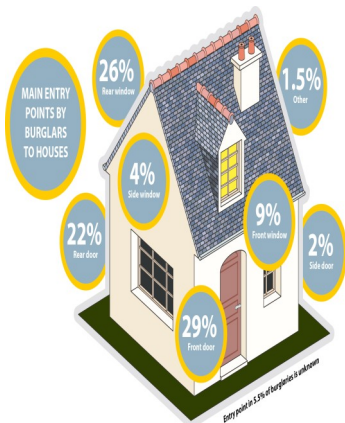

Home Security
Windows

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
- Louvre

MAIN ENTRY POINTS BY BURGLARS TO HOUSES

26% Rear window
1.5% Other
4% Side window
9% Front window
22% Rear door
2% Side door
29% Front door

Entry point in 1.5% of burglaries is unknown

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
- The quality of the fabrication, strength and installation of the window
- The visibility of the window to neighbours or passers-by

We can reduce their attraction as an entry point for the burglar by trying to minimize these risk features.

The accessibility of the window

Remember a thief can generally get through any gap that is slightly larger than a human head – so don't be complacent about their security because of the window size. Windows on the ground floor are more vulnerable than those on the upper floor levels. However upper windows that can easily be reached with a climbing aid, via down-pipes or from an adjoining roof are equally attractive to the burglar. Some of these windows can be protected with decorative metal grilles; but it is impor-

tant to remember that any such fixing should not form an obstruction in the event of an emergency evacuation. Where these grilles are fitted, they should ideally be fitted internally and be retractable or removable as required. Window accessibility and security can also be improved by fitting additional locks, limiters or stronger glazing.

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. The modern approach to window security assesses resistance to forced attack of the whole product and not just the component parts. Good security locks can be fitted to inherently weak frames. Similarly, quality frames may be fitted with glazing of inadequate strength. In some instances, quality windows are poorly installed into the building.

There are many different windows on the market today and all will have some security features. The quality of the products, however, can vary considerably. Some can 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 *24-2012* or equivalent are recommended as these will have been subjected to specific security and burglar resistance tests. When considering the purchase or replacement of windows you should discuss these matters with your glazier or window installation company.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON THIS OR OTHER CRIME PREVENTION ISSUES,
PLEASE CONTACT
your local GARDA CRIME PREVENTION OFFICER
or
visit the Garda website at www.garda.ie**

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.

External Beading

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.

Window Locks and Limiters

You can still improve your window 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.

Annealed 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, toughened 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

Laminated glass consists of two or more layers of ordinary glass bonded together with a strong material called polyvinyl butyral (PVB). It will give 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 film

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.

The advice contained in this information sheet is not intended to be exhaustive or absolute. At all times it is wise to seek appropriate professional advice where physical or structural changes are made to your property to improve security.

Nothing contained in this publication should be interpreted as mandatory, obligatory or designed to conflict with any statutory regulations.

Useful Contacts and Links

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

An Garda Síochána
  www.garda.ie

The National Standards Authority of Ireland
  www.nsai.ie

Secured by Design
  www.securedbydesign.com

The Associated Locksmiths of Ireland
  www.aloi.net

The Master Locksmiths Association
  www.masterlocksmiths.co.uk