

# Enhancing your home security

**PROTECTION** | A variety of devices are available to make your home a more difficult target for burglars

BY SHEILA BRADY  
CANWEST NEWS SERVICE

OTTAWA — Kevin Birmingham is a compact man whose mandate in life is to stop people from breaking into homes.

But if he's too late and the damage has been done, then the 15-year-veteran of the Ottawa police force is the master of information to foil future break-ins.

The community and neighbourhood officer for West Carleton and Rural Kanata is good at his job and knows what presents a welcome invitation to thieves in rural and suburban settings and the homes that give a cold shoulder to invaders.

On a sunny afternoon earlier this week, he was standing inside one of Cardel's impressive model homes in Kanata Lakes, giving the fancy home a security rating.

"This is pretty good," says the man in the Kevlar vest. "Security can always be better, but you have to go with your comfort zone. If you are driving home and get a feeling in your chest that something is not right, then it's time to fix your security."

I know the very feeling. A couple of summers ago, we were at the cottage and feeling nervous because the high hedge around our Kanata backyard provided the perfect privacy for an intruder.

A neighbour was supposed to be watching the house, taking in the mail. We came home to an open door and an instant case of apprehension. No one was inside. Our neighbour forgot to lock the door.

We changed locks and, within two weeks, replaced the basement windows and installed bars. We felt better, but then our son hit his teens and would leave the back door open and the front door unlocked. There is Rocky, our Ren-frew mountain dog, but Const. Birmingham shakes his head.

"Many times the thieves break in the front door and the dog runs out. Then the neighbours call the owner at work to report the dog is running around. They drive home with a sinking feeling in their chest."

The best bet is to keep your doors locked and to use the best lock: a deadbolt with a double cylinder with a key. Don't leave the key in the lock. Hide it near the door, he advises.

The Cardel home had a deadbolt lock, the required security under the building code. The code doesn't require the double cylinder, but owners of new homes can improve their security by sinking 2 1/2 or three-inch screws in the door, so the hinges are safely secured to the two-by-four frame.

"That makes it harder to break," says the man in blue. Consider a window filament sold by 3M and Ace Security that ensures sidelights won't shatter when thieves try to kick in the glass.

A metal striker plate, set along the edge of the door, protects the lock when a thief tries to kick in the door to gain access, he says.

The aim is to use the 3 D's — deter, delay and detect — to slow down or stop intruders, says Const. Birmingham, as we head to the kitchen and the patio door. Here he shows Cardel vice-president Kevin Pelletier a few adjustments and how a couple of dollars will add a big security factor to the back entrance.

Patio doors can be lifted out of their track for repairs or a burglary attempt, says the officer, neatly showing how the door moves up and out of the track. "That's okay, because that's how they are installed."

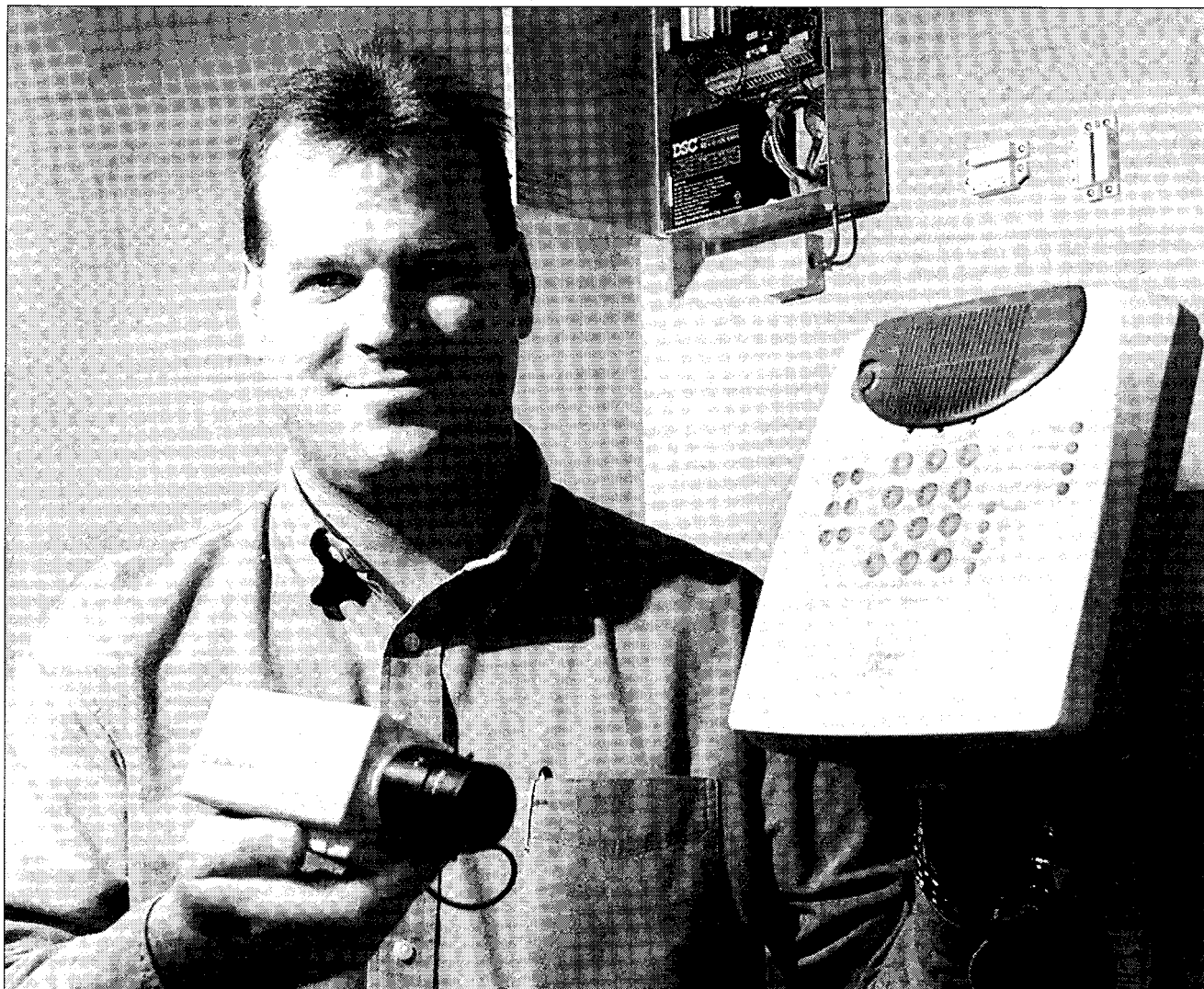
A screwdriver and a few screws into the track keeps the door in one place. Then you can chop up a hockey stick and fix it between the edge of one door and the wall. "That will slow down the thief," says the officer, adding a Charlie Bar also sends a visual message to Mr. and Ms. Bad Guys because it is across the door and clearly visible.

He praised Cardel's windows, crank, awning models, used throughout the house. "The cranks are good, but only if they are locked," he says.

Down in the basement, he found the weak entry to the house, an entry point for most break-ins. The narrow sliding windows can be easily jimmied with a screw driver held against the plastic latch. The answer is to use additional screws in the frame and install bars. The bars should open on at least one of the windows for an easy escape in case of fire. It's also best to keep the key to the bars on a nearby wall, he said.

Cardel had installed a motion security system, which would have stopped thieves.

Back outside, he had solid, affordable advice to deter vandals.



BRIGITTE BOUVIER/OTTAWA CITIZEN

**Todd Clarke, vice-president of sales and marketing for Alarm Bridge Security Networks, shows off home monitoring and security systems.**

“Some homes scream to thieves,” says Const. Birmingham, who calls break and enters crimes of opportunity. These are also crimes that usually take place during the daylight hours, between 9.30 a.m. and 3.30 p.m., Monday to Friday. “It’s an issue of double income families and the vandals knowing no one is home.”

Outside, vandals don’t like motion lights that come on, therefore install lights at each corner of the house. Consider hooking your garage door opener to a timer so it can’t be opened when you are at work or away on holidays. A common crime sees vandals stealing a car, and using the garage door opener to gain access and clean out valuables, says the officer.

Don’t leave the garage door open when you are in the backyard because vandals could case the contents and return later. Don’t leave a ladder by the side of the house. It provides easy access to a second-level window that may be open.

Trim shrubbery so it is no higher than one metre and doesn’t hide vandals at work or obstruct views of your windows. With trees, trim them one metre

up from the ground so the house and windows are visible, he says.

If you still feel uncomfortable, think about installing a security system. Some builders include the rough-in for a security system.

Finally, think about starting up a Neighbourhood Watch Program, says Const. Birmingham. “Neighbours across

the street and next door are the best protection.”

You can also call your area community police office and have an officer or a trained volunteer come to your house for a security assessment. Then there will be no worries about security and home tweaking your holiday enjoyment.

*Ottawa Citizen*

# Alarm systems can fit just about any budget

BY JADRANKA BACIC  
FOR CANWEST NEWS SERVICE

**SYSTEMS** | OTTAWA — If you think an alarm system is an expensive luxury, think again. There are packages to suit just about every budget. Check with a local alarm company for exact prices.

Basic: \$100 to \$300

Typically, this system includes a control panel, coverage of eight zones, back-up battery, two door/window sensors, motion detector, interior siren, keypad, warning decals and all the necessary components to activate the system.

• Standard: \$300 to \$600

This system usually includes a control panel, coverage of eight to 16 zones, back-up battery, three door/window sensors, motion detector, interior siren, keypad, warning decals, wireless option and all necessary components to activate the system.

• Premium: \$600 to \$800

This system typically includes a control

panel, coverage of 16 or more zones, back-up battery, three door/window sensors, motion detector, interior siren, keypad, warning decals, wireless option and all necessary components to activate the system.

Any optional features, such as closed circuit televisions and intercoms, will add to the price of a home security package.

Remember to include monthly monitoring charges when budgeting for a burglar alarm system. Rates can vary between \$25 and \$40 a month, depending on the length and terms of the contract, as well as the system being monitored.

Making your home safer from crime doesn't have to start with an alarm system. Effective home security starts with properly locked doors and windows as well as visible and well-lit entryways.

• Here are some low-cost suggestions to protect your home from being targeted by burglars.

1. Lock your doors and windows.
2. Leave your outside lights on at night.
3. Leave some lights on when you're away from home or have timers installed if you're going to be away for an extended period.
4. All entryways should have a working keyed entry lock and a sturdy dead-bolt lock installed into the frame of the door.
5. Doors should be solid hardwood or metal-clad.
6. If there are glass panels in or near doors, have them reinforced so they cannot be shattered.
7. Reduce places around your home where burglars can hide. Keep shrubs and bushes trimmed and dark areas around your yard lighted.
8. Lock garage doors to protect valuables stored inside and prevent access to your home.
9. Park in the driveway to give the appearance that someone is home.
10. Don't leave tools outside that can help burglars gain access to your home. Put ladders away and lock garages and garden sheds.
11. Sliding glass doors should have a working key lock.
12. Install wooden dowels, pins or a charlie bar to prevent the sliding door from being lifted off its track.
13. Leave spare keys with a trusted neighbour, not under a doormat or planter, on a ledge, or in the mailbox.
14. Leave the radio on to make it sound like someone is home.
15. Arrange to have a neighbour or friend collect newspapers and mail while you're away.

Ottawa Citizen