

practical

safe and sound

Here's how to keep your home protected from a burglary and accidents

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Living in Singapore, we are all blessed with an abundance of clean air, potable water, as well as scrumptious food. More importantly, we are living in a country with one of the lowest crime rates in the world. However, there has been recently a significant rise in the number of cases of burglaries. In 2009, there was reportedly a 14.25% increase in such incidents from 2008; this amounts to a total of 128 more burglaries in a mere space of one year.

Even though burglary may be the main threat that homeowners in Singapore face these days, there are also security concerns regarding fire, in addition to home safety issues that involve children, the elderly and even foreign domestic helpers. In order to protect our loved ones, we have to get into the right frame of mind and start following these tips on how to ensure our homes are safe and secure. If you haven't yet put them into practice, it is still definitely better to start now than never!

Lock it in!

This is a no-brainer: first, you have to get high-quality locks, doors and window grilles for your home. There is really no point in setting up a state-of-the-art alarm and detection system when your doors are as flimsy as cardboard, or your locks can be hammered open with a thermos flask. As the average break-in time equates to less than 30 seconds, the main purpose of going to such an extent is to slow the burglar down in his nefarious act and buy some time for him to be detected by man or machine.

Peruse the whole smorgasbord of locks available at your nearest DIY fix-it store, and choose from keyless entry locks or locks that combine both latch bolts and dead bolts into one. Schlage locks boast of a lot of key waves, making it harder for burglars to pick them in the shortest amount of time possible. For techies, biometric fingerprint door locks are a viable option.

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Taking security to the next level, Ademco, one of the leaders in the security industry in Asia, has launched a new Bluetooth-enabled wireless technology that lets you lock and unlock doors using your mobile phone. Now that's effortless security literally right in your palm!

It is extremely vital to install house doors made of a strong and sturdy material such as wood, or perhaps even strengthened with a stainless steel security mesh screen. Window or door grilles that are made of heavy duty aluminum ensure that while your homes are secure and protected, you will not have to face the trouble of dealing with rusty or corroded grilles, thus saving you more time and money in the long run. (Window grilles also do an excellent job of preventing unnecessary accidental falls, especially if you are living on a high storey with young children.) All these measures may not be able to keep the burglars out for good, but they will certainly keep them out for longer.



Break free from break-ins

It is good to recognize the vulnerable break-in points of your home.

- 1 Landed properties have multiple entry points but intruders would first have to get past the fence or walls around the house.
- 2 For condominium apartments, balconies should be of exceptional concern because they tend to be near parapets, pipes or landings – all perfect means for an intruder to sneak in and out of your home.
- 3 HDB flat-owners should take note of the windows along the common corridor, as they allow any passerby to peer into your home.

Bells and whistles

If budget permits, it is useful to install an alarm system or a closed circuit television (CCTV) system in your home. Both are excellent deterrents, and any burglar, upon seeing such systems installed in your home, will think twice about breaking in.

An alarm system mainly comprises of contacts that are installed on doors and windows, glass-break sensors that will detect if a window has been broken, motion detectors and 24-hour alarm monitoring that will inform you of a break-in even if you are not at home. A back-up battery is essential for the alarm system, in the event of battery failure. Although you may be able to obtain DIY semi-professional wireless alarm systems available at hardware stores, it is still advisable to hire a professional to install the system for you.

CCTV cameras should be placed in obvious locations for maximum effect. Apart from monitoring intruder activity, they can also be used to keep an eye on your children or elderly family members while at work. It also doubles as an 'eye' you can keep on house help.

Fire burning

The Singapore Civil Defence Force has generously and thoughtfully implemented a Shelter Programme that makes it compulsory for all new flats and houses to be equipped with bomb shelters. These secure, ventilated rooms are what you should gravely consider when buying a new home; you'll never know when war might hit us. But in the event of a fire, these shelters are totally unsuitable for seeking refuge in.

Make full use of your alarm system and connect smoke detectors to its control panel. When activated and triggered, you will be notified immediately and can then prevent any further accidents while you start fighting the fire – or escaping from it – with full force. Needless to say, keeping fire extinguishers at home is a must!





Design: Design Channel

EXPERT SECURITY

Interview with Toby Koh, Managing Director of Ademco (Far East), a leading provider of security solutions and services to businesses, governments and now even private residences in Asia



What are the best security gadgets for homeowners?

I would recommend the Intrusion Detection System (IDS). In an alarm condition, the Security Control Panel will seize the telephone line and override it in order to send the alarm signal out to the Central Alarms Monitoring Station (CMS). Hence, it will not matter if the home phone line is in use because alarm signals always have priority. The CMS will then react according to predetermined instructions.

Our Ademco IDS has a very important feature – the Special Duress Feature. If homeowners are forced at knifepoint by intruders to disarm the alarm system, they will be able to enter in a special duress code that will immediately send a silent panic signal to the CMS, which will then inform the Police immediately.

What is the most important thing to consider when installing a CCTV or an alarm system?

Before you purchase a CCTV system, you should always ask yourself what you would like to see. A professional security vendor will then be able to ascertain the appropriate camera, lens and digital video recorder for your purpose and taking into consideration the lighting levels and immediate environment. I strongly recommend that you insist on a live demo of the system offered. Technical

specification of the equipment may be fairly complex and may not correlate with actual performance.

A proper method of cabling in the installation of conduits in the walls is also important. Beware of cabling works that embed bare wires in grooves in the wall which leave the wires unprotected, leading to rapid deterioration and resulting in false alarm problems.

Other things to take note of include a comprehensive warranty policy, as well as a reputable security vendor with a good track record.

What will be the next new trend in security gadgets?

Intelligent video analytics is a growing trend. Using CCTV cameras around the perimeter of a large bungalow is the first line of protection. It will be able to detect an intruder scaling the wall or fence, even before he reaches the exterior wall of the house. More importantly, because of the intelligence in the software, false alarms are virtually eliminated. This is especially useful for homes in large compounds or residences boasting of gardens with extensive landscaping.

Meanwhile, integrated security solutions in homes are gaining popularity. A fully integrated intrusion detection system can be linked up with a CCTV system, fingerprint biometrics access control system, as well as monitor the electric locks in every window and door.