

SECTION 3: SAFETY AT HOME

SAFETY AT HOME

Many real estate professionals have home offices. Whether you work at home or not, you might want to consider additional steps to secure your home. Here are a few tips:

- Consider investing in an alarm system if you don't already have one. If you do, make sure you have a panic button feature you can easily use in the room you use as an office.
- Your home should have deadbolts with full one-inch bolts on all entry doors. These should be installed in addition to existing locksets. If you have a door with glass panels within three feet of the lock, you should have a double-cylinder deadbolt, which requires a key on both sides so that a burglar cannot simply break the glass and reach through to unlock the door. If a door has conventional glass panels, consider replacing them with shatterproof glass or with polycarbonate material.
- If you have just moved in to a house or apartment, have all locks re-keyed immediately.
- If you must provide copies of your keys to housekeepers, contractors or other workers, be sure to give as few keys as possible—for example, just one key that opens one door. If you terminate a worker who has your key, consider changing the lock, even if you get your key back.
- Place a wooden rod in the track of a sliding glass door so it can't be opened from outside. To prevent sliding doors from being lifted from their frames, install shims along the top frames; these fit in the tracks between the top of the door and frame and prevent the door from being raised high enough to be removed.
- Pay special attention to your basement windows. Bushes or trees may hide these windows, providing a place for criminals to work without being seen. Consider reinforcing the windows with security bars, wire mesh or Plexiglas.
- Install a deadbolt lock on the door of your office, so that it becomes a "safe room" that you can lock yourself into if you are threatened. If the office is on an upper floor, plan an escape route from the room; consider keeping a rope ladder in the room.

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- Make sure all porches, entrance areas, and yards are well lit. Turn on exterior lights when you're home at night, plus interior lights when you're away in the evening.
- Prune any shrubbery that hides doors or windows. Remove tree limbs that allow access to reach second story windows.
- Don't hide house keys in mailboxes, planters, or under doormats. Never put your name on your key chain—this creates an easy way for someone to figure out where you live, and then would have access to your home and car.
- Keep garage windows covered. There is a lot about your garage you don't want potential criminals to know about—such as whether someone is home, or if there are tools or ladders available to help break in to your home. If you have an attached garage, make sure the door that connects your house to the garage is a solid core exterior door with a deadbolt lock.
- Even though you have a telephone in your home office, keep a charged mobile phone with you at all times. Program any emergency phone numbers as speed-dials on your office line as well as your mobile phone.
- For a detailed security analysis of your home, contact a bonded professional locksmith who is an accredited member of a National Locksmith Association. Finally, your police and sheriff's department will be glad to help when needed. Call them immediately if you see, hear or have a good reason to suspect that a crime is being committed.

(Sources: Nevada County Board of REALTORS®, Home Safety Council, Kwikset)