

# Protecting Your Home Multi Unit Dwellings



The size and vertical nature of the residential hi-rise environment makes it extremely difficult for people to get to know their neighbours or develop a sense of community. This can lessen our instinct to protect “your turf” especially when it comes to some of the more common yet vulnerable areas of our building including the front lobby, underground garage or other shared facilities. Apartment owners, or renters, are at greater risk than house owners because of the possibility of intruders wandering around casing the building. Even if you know every occupant, you would not know who was a visitor and who wasn’t.

When it comes to burglary and other in-the-home crime, those of us that live in apartments are perhaps slightly more at risk than those that live in houses. This is, to an extent, because your apartment security is not completely under your own control. Security for the building itself is mainly in the control of the management.

Some multi-occupancy building managers, or owners, treat protecting their tenants very seriously, others do not. If you feel that the security of your apartment building could be improved in some way you should not hesitate in pointing this out to the management.

Both tenants and landlords have a stake in the security of rental units, but neither can ensure the safety of a property without the co-operation of the other. If, in spite of your repeated efforts to get security improved, the management does not act you could look for another apartment complex where apartment security and the well being of occupants is given a higher priority.

We all have the potential to be victims of crime. Each of us can REDUCE THE RISK of our homes/property being victimized by eliminating the opportunity.



### MAKE AN EFFORT TO KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOURS.

As a TENANT we encourage you to:

- take notice of the people you find in and around your building and, where a safe opportunity arises, introduce yourself to the people who you recognize as neighbours.
- use your building's facilities during active times.
- develop or participate in building related groups.

Probably the single most effective thing that you can do to improve your apartment's security is to join, and participate in, Neighborhood Watch. Apartment buildings often have their own Neighborhood Watch groups; they are not just for streets or blocks. If your building does not have a Watch—start one! Really, it's easy, it's fun and it works. The first step is to inquire at your local police station; you will find them a tremendous help.

Neighbor looking out for neighbor is vital for security in an apartment complex. If all the occupants know each other then it is far easier to spot someone who should not be in the building.

If your neighbors know what times of the day you are out, or know when you are away on business or vacation, and they hear someone moving about inside your apartment they would know that something is likely amiss. If they don't know you or your habits and they heard noise from your apartment they probably would assume that it is you.

Apartment Watch groups can publish a news bulletin that highlights local crime and scams that are being carried out in the area. The bulletin can also pass on tips for improving security.

Also, complaints to the management about shortfalls in apartment security carry more weight when made by a group of organized tenants, you can count on it. Suggestions made by the group for improving protection will also stand a greater chance of being listened to...and implemented.

As a LANDLORD we encourage you to:

- facilitate introductions between residents whenever the opportunity arises.
- foster a sense of community by publishing a newsletter.
- regularly host information/Neighbourhood Watch meetings and/or social gatherings.
- ensure tenants are aware of who to contact with security/safety concerns. If a tenant observes suspicious activity in the building or on the grounds, is there an after-hours phone number he she can contact? If your property employees security personnel, do tenants have a contact number?

### LOBBY SECURITY

As a TENANT we encourage you to:

- take notice of strangers hanging around entry points.
- report suspicious activity to your superintendent such as people having an extended conversation on the inter-phone system.
- always make sure that a door latches properly after you have exited it.
- if you find a door that is open or not latched properly, close it.
- if you find a door that does not latch properly or is propped open, report it to the superintendent so that he can deal with it and monitor the situation.
- never buzz anyone that you are not expecting into the building. This is a very old trick. Criminals will invent some very plausible reasons to try and persuade you to let them in. "The Browns at apartment 36 have ordered a Hawaiian Special and they are not answering, could you do me the favor of letting me in?" Don't. "I'm from Acme repair and there was an urgent call from 25 would you please let me in?" Don't. Advise them to buzz the superintendent.
- never open a locked or access-controlled door for a stranger. In the event that a loiterer or suspicious stranger uses a door that you have opened to gain access to your building, take a moment to report that person to your building's superintendent. Remember, your actions may prevent a crime that could involve your property.

As a LANDLORD we encourage you to:

- post a sign with the following messages on the outside and inside of the front lobby door. Outside: "We can not open our door to strangers." Inside: "Do not open this door to strangers."
- it is vital that doors be kept in good working order. Help prevent doors from being propped open by keeping door areas clear of small stones, rocks, sticks, etc. Doors should be mounted so hinge-bolts are not facing outwards.
- keep your building locked. Many times, the safety and security of you and your property can be compromised by people who prop open doors or by doors that do not latch properly.

### IMPROVE THE SECURITY OF YOUR RESIDENCE.

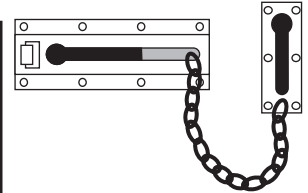
- when you move into a new building request that the lock/cylinder be changed so previous tenants cannot enter.



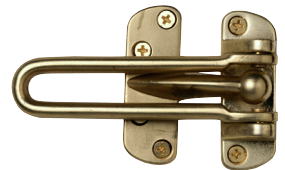
## PROTECTING YOUR HOME - MULTI UNIT DWELLINGS



- as a minimum standard, the entrance to your residence should be equipped with a peephole viewer, preferably a doorscope, a good quality deadbolt with a one inch throw, and a 4 hole security strike plate to accept the deadbolt latch.
- if your residence is on or near the ground floor, it is important that you keep the windows closed and locked and you take extra precautions to secure all sliding doors or windows.
- always, but always, lock your door when you go out of your apartment. Do this even if you are just going to the convenience store, to the laundry room or even just going along the hall. You only need to slip out of your apartment for a 'moment' and an opportunistic thief can slip in, steal what he takes a fancy to and slip out again. Get into the good security habit of always locking your door. Be sure to keep terrace and balcony doors locked.
- make sure all exterior windows have security devices if the sills are within 24 feet of ground level or are accessible by means of balconies, fire escapes, porches, etc.
- never open your door until you know who is there. Use a peephole. Don't rely on a chain latch for security.
- DO NOT leave notes on your apartment door or on the lobby directory.
- call 911 when you see illegal or suspicious activity, and then report it to your landlord.



Most apartments today are equipped with the type of security chain above. The type shown below is much more secure—chains are easily cut or broken. Whichever type you use, be aware that the device's strength is dependent on the length of screws and the sturdiness of the material to which it is attached.



### ELEVATORS

It is always prudent to use caution whenever you use an elevator. Here are some basic tips that will help keep you safe.

While waiting for the elevator always stand off to the side of the elevator doors and look inside an elevator before you make a decision to get on. If you don't feel comfortable about its occupants, don't go in. If you do not feel comfortable about someone who has followed you into the elevator, get off.

While inside the elevator Stand near the control panel. In the event that you are confronted, push all the floor buttons and the emergency button. DO NOT push the stop button as you may be trapped between floors.

### LAUNDRY ROOMS

Laundry rooms are often isolated and underutilized. This, along with coin operated laundry machines, may draw loiterers or people looking for crime opportunity. Always exercise caution whenever using a laundry facility by following these dos and don'ts:

#### DO

- time your trips for active periods when other people are present or use the buddy system.
- if you anticipate going alone, tell a friend or relative where you're going and how long you expect to be.
- if your laundry room has windows take a look in the facility before you decide to enter.
- report any suspicious activity to your building superintendent.

#### DON'T

- stay in a facility should you become uncomfortable.

#### Landlord

The introduction of a window from a well-traveled hall into the laundry can significantly increase the safety and security by making it a less private area.



☛ This laundry room is clean and bright, but there is no view into the room from the outside, making it an ideal place to commit a theft or personal attack.

☛ Windows from the laundry room to either the outside or to the adjacent hallway not only makes the room seem bigger and more "airy", but dramatically increases the witness potential, discouraging crime.





## PROTECTING YOUR HOME - MULTI UNIT DWELLINGS

### PARKING AREAS

Parking areas, whether above or underground, present unique challenges for your safety and the security of your vehicle as they are readily trespassed and provide lots of crime opportunity. In order to discourage trespassers and protect you and your property, we encourage you to follow these dos and don'ts:

#### DO

- always pay attention to your surroundings especially as you enter or exit the garage whether on foot or in your vehicle.
- take notice of people who loiter near an entrance or in the garage.
- have your keys in hand so you do not have to linger before entering your car or building.
- view the interior of your vehicle before entering to ensure that no one is hiding inside, even if the doors were locked.
- always lock your car after entering and when leaving it.
- watch for people who use the ramp to enter the garage on foot once you have cleared the opening.
- report damage, suspicious activity and defective lights to your superintendent and where appropriate the police.
- keep the area around your car free of old batteries, blocks of woods etc. or anything that can be used as a means of attack against you or your property.

#### DON'T

- mark apartment numbers on parking spaces; it gives burglars a big clue as to whether there is somebody at home or not. If it is the system for your building to mark parking spaces with apartment numbers, agitate to get the system changed.
- get out of your car if you see something that makes you feel unsafe. Instead exit the garage and park at the front of the building and report all suspicious activity to the police or your superintendent.
- store valuable property inside your vehicle.

#### Landlord

Landlords can keep trespass to a minimum by ensuring that the overhead door is in good working order and the door cycle does not exceed 35 to 40 seconds. Car thefts can be reduced dramatically by controlling egress with your access control system. Always replace defective lights immediately and keep the garage as clean as possible. Maximize the brightness of your garage by painting the walls and ceilings white with a reflective paint.

### IF A CRIME HAS OCCURRED

- DO NOT enter—the criminal may still be inside.
- Use a neighbour's phone and call the police.
- DO NOT touch anything or clean up until the police have inspected for evidence.
- Note the licence number of any suspicious vehicle and the description of any suspicious person(s).

Please read our other information sheets: *Home Absences* and *Home Inventory*. If you live on a lower floor also see *Home Windows*. *Apartment CPTED* should be of interest to Apartment building landlords.

*Crime Reduction Canada wishes to acknowledge the sponsorship of*



*Without their generous sponsorship, the Crime Reduction Canada web site would be not be possible.*



This document was prepared as a public service by Crime Reduction Canada.  
[www.CrimeReductionCanada.com](http://www.CrimeReductionCanada.com)