



Chowchilla Police Department

Jay A. Varney, Chief of Police
122 Trinity Avenue, Chowchilla, California 93610



Five tips to avoid Christmas burglaries

Brand new, high-value presents offer rich pickings for burglars at Christmas time. But there are some practical tips to help homeowners avoid being victims of crime.

Forget Santa Claus shimmying down your chimney; it's burglars you may have to contend with this coming festive season. Christmas traditionally sees a spike in incidents of domestic burglary, as organized and opportunistic thieves target homeowners who have stocked up on presents, or who leave their homes unattended while off visiting relatives.

However, there are some sensible precautions that can be taken to reduce the likelihood you'll be a victim of crime:

1. Don't keep presents in view, and always close your curtains after dark. Don't keep receipts with your presents either, as this could enable a thief to return what you've bought in exchange for cold hard cash.
2. Don't put wrapping and discarded boxes out for trash collection too early, and consider concealing it among other types of trash. Obvious packaging left outside your property could alert a burglar to the presence of high value items - just the kinds of things they will target.
3. Check that your doors and windows are locked when they aren't in use.
4. Secure outside decorations and Christmas lights.
5. If you are spending a small fortune on gifts at Christmas, remember to inform your insurer that you'll have new, expensive items under your roof.

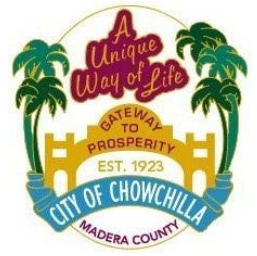
Service & Safety

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Some other basic common sense tips to help deter burglars:

Light up your residence, **lock** your doors at all times, and call the **Police** when you see something suspicious.

- Make your home look occupied, and make it difficult to break in.
- Lock all outside doors and windows before you leave the house or go to bed. Even if it is for a short time, lock your doors.
- Leave lights on when you go out. If you are going to be away for a length of time, connect some lamps to automatic timers to turn them on in the evening and off during the day.
- Keep your garage door closed and locked.
- Don't allow daily deliveries of mail, newspapers or flyers build up while you are away. Arrange with the Post Office to hold your mail, or arrange for a friend or neighbor to take them regularly.
- Arrange for your lawn to be mowed if you are going away for an extended time.
- Check your locks on doors and windows and replace them with secure devices as necessary.
- Pushbutton locks on doorknobs are easy for burglars to open. Install deadbolt locks on all your outside doors.
- Sliding glass doors are vulnerable. Special locks are available for better security.
- Other windows may need better locks. Check with a locksmith or hardware store for alternatives.

Don't Tempt a Thief:

- Lawn mowers, barbecues and bicycles are best stored out of sight
- Always lock your garden sheds and garages.
- Use curtains on garage and basement windows.
- Never leave notes on your door such as "Gone shopping."

Locks...Get the Best:

- No lock, regardless of its quality, can be truly effective. Key-in dead bolt locks provide minimum security. Ask a locksmith for advice on your situation.
- Change locks immediately if your keys are lost or stolen.
- When moving into a new home, have all locks changed.

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Targeting the Outside:

- Have adequate exterior lighting. A motion-sensitive light is recommended for backyards.
- Trim trees and shrubs so that they cannot be used as hiding places for intruders.
- Make sure your door hinges are on the inside.

Windows:

- Most windows can be pinned for security.
- Drill a 3/16" hole on a slight downward slant through the inside window frame and halfway into the outside frame - place a nail in the hole to secure the window.

Alarms:

- An alarm system is excellent for home security. It provides peace of mind to homeowners, especially while on vacation. There is a wide variety of alarm systems on the market.
- Make several inquiries to different companies for the best security system available to you.
- **If you have a home alarm system, use it!** *Activate your alarm system* — Alarm systems are only useful when you remember to activate them.
- Many individuals have alarm systems but do not arm them because it is inconvenient. Many burglars know this and will not be deterred by a window sticker or sign indicating that the home has an alarm system.
- ***Please notify the Police Department immediately if you have an alarm installed with emergency contact information. Also ensure you notify them immediately if you have a false alarm to avoid being billed for the response.***

If Your Home Is Broken Into:

If you come home to find an unexplained open/broken window or door:

- Do not enter - the perpetrator may still be inside.
- Use a neighbor's phone to call police.
- Do not touch anything or clean up until the police have inspected for evidence.
- Write down the license plate numbers of any suspicious vehicles.
- Note the descriptions of any suspicious persons.

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Other precautions you should take:

- Never leave keys under doormats, flowerpots, mailboxes or other “secret” hiding places -- burglars know where to look for hidden keys.
- Keep a detailed inventory of your valuable possessions, including a description of the items, date of purchase and original value, and serial numbers, and keep a copy in a safe place away from home — this is a good precaution in case of fires or other disasters. Make a photographic or video record of valuable objects, heirlooms and antiques. Your insurance company can provide assistance in making and keeping your inventory.
- Trim your shrubbery around your home to reduce cover for burglars.
- Be a good neighbor. If you notice anything suspicious in your neighborhood, call 9-1-1 immediately.
- Mark your valuables with your driver's license number with an engraver you can borrow from your precinct. Marked items are harder for a burglar to dispose of and easier for police to recover.
- Form a Neighborhood Watch Group. We can help you work with your neighbors to improve security and reduce risk of burglary.
- Consider installing a burglar alarm system.

Car Burglaries

Tips on how to avoid car break-ins:

- Do not leave valuables in plain view:
(GPS devices, lap tops, PDAs, cell phones, MP3s, wallets, purses)
- Do not leave windows or sunroof open.
- Do not leave doors unlocked.
- Do not leave keys in the vehicle.
- Do not leave the garage door opener in plain view.
- Do not leave out items with personal information.
- Do not move valuable items to the trunk while in public view.
- Slow Down and use common sense before you leave your car.

Sgt. Riviere stated “The MOST important thing YOU can do is CALL THE POLICE to report a CRIME or any SUSPICIOUS activity.” The members of the Chowchilla Police Department would like to wish our citizens a very safe and happy holiday season.

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