



A Few Thoughts on Home Protective Strategy From Your Security Committee

Security Tip #15: Protecting the Home Front

Your Security Committee has repeatedly stressed that the development of an active shooter strategy should be a priority for every federal courthouse. But a judge's protective responsibility extends beyond the protected perimeter of the courthouse—it includes their home and family.

For the disgruntled litigant bent on revenge, a judge's home typically presents a much softer target than a well-protected courthouse. Although it is difficult to quantify, a disturbing number of judges across America, or a member of their family, have been confronted at their residence by an angry litigant. Several of these incidents have resulted in life-threatening incidents.

A home protective strategy has three critical elements—interior, exterior, and personal vigilance. Situational awareness by family members is essential and can often provide an indication of potential danger. Family members should take careful note of strange phone calls or correspondence, unfamiliar occupied vehicles parked near their house, suspicious appearing solicitors, and pedestrians wandering through the neighborhood. Particular attention should be given to those wearing heavy clothing on warm days, which may conceal weapons.

Within the residence, it is important to develop the same type of active shooter strategy recommended for courthouses. As you may recall, this plan of action has three critical components—run, hide, and as a last resort, physically disarm or incapacitate the shooter. Always remember, the primary goal is survival. If family members cannot safely exit the residence, they should be taught to quickly shelter in a secure, predesignated area. Obviously, the designated room or closet should, if possible, have a secure locking mechanism controllable from the inside. Ideally, the door to the secure area should be of solid construction and close toward the interior, allowing the use of door wedges to further inhibit access. Windowless rooms afford optimum protection. Family members should be instructed to take a cell phone with them when sheltering to enable communication with law enforcement and remain in place until they arrive. Experience has taught that a well-defined response plan can significantly reduce the chance of death, injury, or physical abuse.

Your Security Committee has previously addressed exterior home security (Security Tip #3: Securing the Home with Alarms, Locks, Windows and Landscaping). However, as a convenient reference, we have provided the attached list of recommended exterior security measures.

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Home and Outer Perimeter Security

- A. Deter, detect and delay—objectives.
- B. Common for intruders to conduct surveillance—assess points of vulnerability.
- C. Landscaping and exterior lighting—first layer of home protection.
- D. Eliminate potential hiding place—clear line of visibility.
- E. Minimal density of landscaping.
- F. Shrubs near house, no more than three feet.
- G. Bushes maintained about seven feet.
- H. Thorny, prickly shrubs near windows and fence line—an obstacle.
- I. Trunks of larger trees ideally no more than seven feet in height.
- J. Enhance visibility by illuminating trees and shrubs.
- K. Motion-activated lights can illuminate and warn of encroachment.
- L. Lamp posts and timed lights advisable.
- M. Interior—sound locks, sturdy doors, and alarms.
- N. Exterior doors—solid wood or metal—minimal glass—no access to door bolt if broken. If your door does have glass, ensure that your deadbolt requires a key to operate from both sides.

- O. Door should be flush with frame—bolts should penetrate an inch into frame. Aftermarket security bars inexpensive enhancement.
- P. Windows greatest point of vulnerability. Double-plated glass—requiring multiple blows to shatter or aftermarket laminate. Burglars avoid noise (breaking glass/alarm).
- Q. Keep windows locked—window pinning helpful—nail or pin in frame of sliding section.
- R. Sliding glass or horizontal windows—place broom handle at base or dowel on upper section (prevents lifting window from panel).
- S. Home security alarms—highly recommended. Control panels—primary bedroom and lower level, glass break detectors, door and window contacts, motion detectors, and alarm annunciator.
- T. Panel should not be visible from window—allows intruder to see if alarm is activated.
- U. Cell Guard—enables alarm signal to be conveyed by cell phone if land line severed.
- V. Cell phone—valuable security device—keep in bedroom, carry in hand in vulnerable areas.
- W. Large dog water bowl or “Beware of Dog” sign—are visual deterrents.

- X. Peep holes—a simple device for your door allows you to look before you open a door to an unwanted visitor.
- Y. First aid equipment—in case of an emergency.