

Taking Responsibility for Our Neighborhood Safety

A continuing area of interest within our residents association is to keep abreast of safety issues specifically related to our neighborhood. Several times a year we meet with Sarasota Police Department representatives to review current crime data and prevention techniques. Overall, Sarasota is one of the safest cities in the country and St Armands the safest residential area within the city. Our past safety record can be attributed to many causes, chief among these is the outstanding support we receive from the Police Department and our residents proactive actions to maintain a safe neighborhood.

However, criminals are opportunists continually on the outlook, hence we are not crime free. In the past year we have had several actual/attempted home break-ins, an occasional theft of items from yards, and at least one con artist gaining access to a home for purposes of theft. In these cases, crime was very personal and past statistics somewhat meaningless.

Therefore, we need to be mindful that crime prevention is not just the job of our Police Department. For the safety of neighbors, and ourselves we each need to keep an awareness of simple common sense approaches as we go about our lives. I recommend everyone visit the Police Departments web site shown at the end of this article. The site offers the following suggestions, plus considerations for other occasions as well. The only thing I might add to the list, if you notice unusual strangers or odd occurrences that arouse your suspicion, call our neighborhood on duty officer (915-1720) or of course in case of emergency 911.

At home...

- Always keep your doors and windows locked. Install dead-bolt locks on all doors.
- Keep your home well lit at night, inside and out, and keep your curtains closed at night.
- Install a peephole in your front door so you can see callers without opening the door.
- Ask for proper identification from delivery men or strangers. Don't be afraid of asking if they are legitimate they won't mind.
- Never give your credit card, phone card, social security, or bank account number to anyone over the phone unless you've placed the call.
- If a stranger asks to use your telephone, offer to place the call for him/her yourself. Never let a stranger into your home.
- Do not leave notes on your door when you are gone, and do not hide your keys under the mat or in other conspicuous places.

- Never give out information over the phone indicating you are alone or that you won't be home at a certain time.
- When you are gone for more than a day, make sure your home looks and sounds occupied —use automatic timers to turn on lights and a radio or television. Cancel your mail and newspaper deliveries.

Sarasota Police Department Crime Tips web page:
<http://www.sarasotagov.com/Police/PoliceInfoCrimeTips.html>

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