Crime Prevention Tips for Gated, Individual-Home Communities

by Rony Joseph

All too often, we have a false sense of security when we live in a gated community. While a gated community is safer than a non-gated community, several other key ingredients should also be part of the communities overall security plan:

A properly selected professionally-trained and supervised security company.

The security plan at your community should begin with this. You should ask management and the security company if they did a security assessment on your site. If so when was it last updated? Were the recommendations implemented? Also your security provider should be an
armed group (not required but the most effective). Recent interviews with apprehended residential burglars indicated they cased gated communities and picked those who had unarmed guards.

Your security guards at the gate should follow the post orders developed by the association and management to the letter. They should have a computer system with visitor access and screening software and procedures. They should check drivers license/photo ID for verification, and there should be separate visitor access procedures and vendor access procedures.

Your security plan should provide for a marked mobile patrol unit. This unit should patrol 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They must not develop a pattern in their patrol methods that can be detected or timed by an observer. A method to assure random patrol is to install an electronic guard tour system that registers when and where the patrol vehicle has been. The automated patrol report is available to management for review. Part of the patrol plan should be patrolling the exterior perimeter of the property where possible.

An involved resident security committee that participates in developing the security post orders.

This committee should meet at least once a month with the association management and the security company to review any and all issues. They should monitor the security company’s performance and make recommendations for improvement. A representative committee should, where possible, serve as a liaison between local law enforcement and the community.

A burglar alarm program.

The number one crime prevention tool in your plan is to have homes equipped with a modern burglar alarm system, and encouraging/training residents to arm their alarms whenever they leave their home. This truly is the core to a successful security plan.

Have a community plan for sharing information about security issues.

All too often management wants to keep issues that occur in a community quiet such as a car broken into. In fact, sharing of information (not the resident’s name) on the problem that just occurred will assist other residents from becoming a victim by allowing them to take steps when necessary to correct their behavior.

Teach your residents basic crime prevention techniques.

These techniques, if followed, will assist in making the community a safer place to live.

Hold town meetings periodically (at least twice a year) where the residents are instructed in the steps to take to better protect themselves, their family, and their property. This includes:

- Installing a burglar alarm system on your home. If you already have an alarm system, have your alarm company update the system if it is several years old. It should include, at a minimum, wireless glass break sensors and monitored smoke detectors.
- Always keeping your garage door closed when you are not in the garage.
- Never leaving any items in your automobile when parked in front of your home. The same applies when you are off property. The current economic times have spiked automobile burglaries.
- Reinforcing sliding glass doors. They have always been and continue to be a point of entry for burglars. Glass break sensors are the best protection. However, a one-inch rounded wood dowel cut to fit the bottom track of the sliding door will also prevent them from being opened.
- Connecting outside home lighting to motion detectors that will illuminate the property if someone comes within their view.
- Informing your neighbors and the management of your travel plans; remember the oldest trick in the book to tell if someone isn’t home is seeing newspapers piling up in the driveway.

This list is not all inclusive, but it is the outline of a proven gated-community security plan used in Broward and Palm Beach County Florida with great success.

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