

# POLICE OFFICER SAFETY TIPS TO HOMEOWNERS

Continued from page 1

gion as a whole. According to police, there were 266 residential break-ins across Halton just last year.

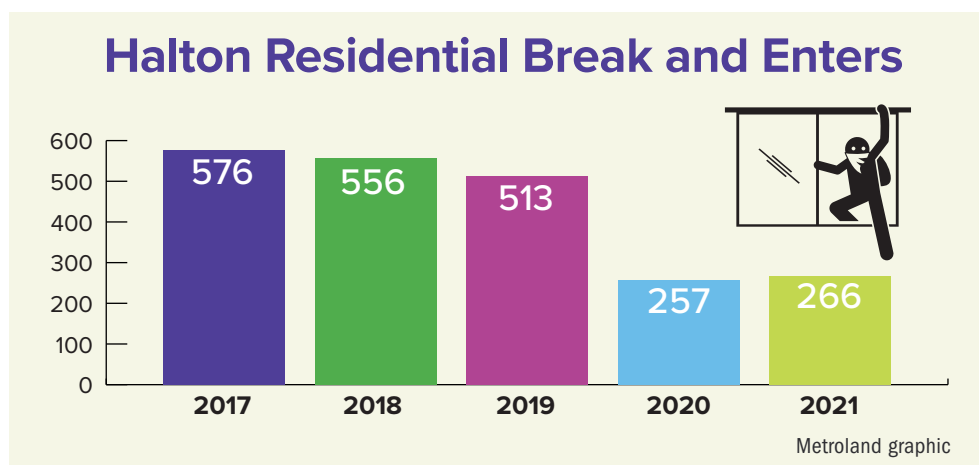
The crimes are often fairly simple operations.

Jason, a Halton resident who for safety concerns requested his last name not be published, was recently the victim of a break-in. In his case, two men walked up to the front door of his home one Friday afternoon and in less than five seconds popped open the door with a pry bar.

Jason and his family were away that weekend. They did have an alarm system, but that didn't deter burglars from entering. It did, however, seem to limit their presence in the house to roughly three minutes.

The thieves went straight for the master bedroom, where they went through every drawer and closet, including suitcases.

"The experience made



for a few sleepless nights and a sense of violation that we have not felt before," said Jason. "(We had) regrets of not doing more to better protect ourselves against this crime."

Following the break-in, the family changed their behaviour. They are now more diligent with activating the alarm system and leave the lights on in the home when out.

"I wish I knew how easy

it was for someone to break into a house and (about) the criminals' disregard for a security and surveillance system," Jason said. "Common valuable hiding spots were obvious to these criminals and needed to be reassessed. I recommend that if you have any valuables, that you install a proper safe for those items when not in use."

There have been some notable changes in the pat-

tern of residential break-ins around the region, according to police. There was a sizable drop in the quantity of this type of crime from 2019 to 2020. In 2019, there were 513 recorded break-ins, while in 2020, that number fell to 257. Last year, the number stayed at roughly the same point with 266 recorded incidents.

Const. Steve Elms of the Halton Regional Police Service said it's impossible to

speculate why exactly there has been such a significant drop, but it is feasible that the COVID-19 pandemic has had an effect.

"A large proportion of residential break-and-enters occur while residents are not home. It is possible that these types of crimes may have decreased merely due to the fact that suspects did not commit them as often because residents were physically at home more," said Elms.

Police have a number of tips to make properties less likely to be targeted for burglary. They advise that residents install secure locks on all doors and windows, store valuable items out of sight, ensure doors have sturdy frame, and have a neighbour pick up deliveries when away for a prolonged period of time.

Colin Jessome, executive director of Halton Crime Stoppers, has a number of tips as well.

"Security cameras, emergency lights and surveillance systems are a great start, as they can deter someone looking for an

easy target. The best way to secure yourself is to share with your trusted neighbours of any vacation or away plans. Neighbourhoods where residents are actively calling out suspicious activity will lessen the likeliness of being a victim," said Jessome.

Crime Stoppers is very active around break-ins, and the organization regularly shares dash cam and home surveillance videos in the hopes of identifying thieves. They receive hundreds of tips every month.

Anyone who is a victim of a break-in is encouraged to call 911. Crime Stoppers will then share your videos, pics and information to help identify the suspects.

*STORY BEHIND THE STORY: While the number has dropped in recent years, residential break-ins remain a regular occurrence across Halton. With that said, we wanted to examine how this impacts victims and what can be done to minimize the risk to residents' homes.*

## CRIME

# SUSPECTS SOUGHT IN ARMED ROBBERY

MELANIE HENNESSEY  
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Halton police are looking for two suspects following the armed robbery of a convenience store in George-

town.

The local department responded to Circle K at 10 Mountainview Rd. S. in the early morning hours last Wednesday (March 24) for reports of the robbery.

"Just before 2:30 a.m.,

two suspects entered the store, approached an employee and demanded cash from the register," said police in a media release. "One of the suspects stated he had a gun, although no gun was observed. The suspects fled

the store with an undisclosed amount of cash."

No physical injuries were sustained during the robbery.

One suspect is described as a Black male in his mid 20s, six foot tall, wearing a black jacket with a fur-trimmed hood and black pants with neon yellow thick stripe.

The other suspect is described as a white male in his mid 20s, five foot 11, wearing a grey jacket and jeans.

According to police, the same two suspects had entered the convenience store at approximately 2:20 a.m. and left, returning shortly thereafter.

Police are asking anyone who may have witnessed the

incident or who has CCTV or dash cam video of the area between 2 a.m. and 2:45 a.m. to contact the 1 District Criminal Investigations Bureau at 905-825-4777, ext. 2416.

Tips can also be submitted anonymously to Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477 (TIPS) or www.haltoncrimestoppers.ca.

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