

Burglar-proof your home with these easy-to follow tips

Unless you turn your home into Fort Knox, opportunities will always exist for burglaries and break-ins. No home is absolutely burglar-proof, or even fire-proof. But there are measures you can take to protect your family and your valuables.

Whether you are going on an extended vacation or simply leaving your home unattended for a couple of hours, take the following precautions:

Be aware

In about the time it takes to read this sentence, someone can burglarize your home. Be aware that break-ins can happen anywhere, anytime. Don't wait until it happens to you or your next door neighbor gets ransacked right under your nose.

Install an alarm system

Research has shown that homes with some form of alarm system are 15 times less likely to be broken into. In addition, homeowners with alarm systems can often get security-related discounts on their home insurance premiums.

Check out a number of systems to determine which is best suited for your home— one that protects boundaries, one that detects motion, one that is monitored centrally or hooked up to a police switchboard, or one that offers a combination of these features.

Think like a burglar

Occupied homes are rarely ransacked. Burglars often stake out homes before they break in. Most avoid homes that look occupied all the time, prominently display alarm system decals or where occupants come and go at unpredictable times.

Your average burglar will target homes with windows and doors that are easy to break or enter, especially if they are camouflaged by overgrown shrubbery, high hedges, other landscaping or low lighting. Most will try to ensure no one is home before they enter.

Take these precautions

- Make your home look occupied at all times. Put lights, a radio and the television on timers.

- If you're away for more than a day, arrange for someone to pick up your mail, clean the snow or cut the lawn. Ask a friend or neighbour to park their car in your driveway.

- When you leave for an extended period, have someone re-set the timers in your home periodically so that they activate at different times.

- If you use a telephone answering machine or service, never reveal your name, whereabouts or any other personal information on the recorded message. Say simply that you can't come to the phone right now.

- Trim any shrubs or bushes near windows and doors. These may increase your privacy, but they make ideal hiding places for burglars.

- Use outdoor sensor lights to illuminate the property and any possible hiding places.

- Secure all exterior doors and windows. A burglar can kick in a weak door. Locks should be good quality deadbolts. All windows should have some form of anti-slide lock, especially if they're located near ground level.

- Do not leave any ladders outside and ensure that any stored in the garage cannot be accessed by burglars. Keep your garage door locked.

- Put some signs on windows and doors warning of a guard dog, high voltage, alarm system, no large amounts of cash or valuables inside. These warnings don't have to be true. The idea is to get the burglar to reconsider the risk.

- Remove any large, decorative outdoor signs with your family name on them. These invite burglars to look up your telephone number and see if you're home.

- Keep large amounts of cash and jewelry in a safety deposit box at a bank. Don't hide these in your home thinking a burglar will never guess the spot. Never underestimate a burglar.

- Make your valuables harder for thieves to sell and easier for the police to find. Engrave all your valuables with some coding method.

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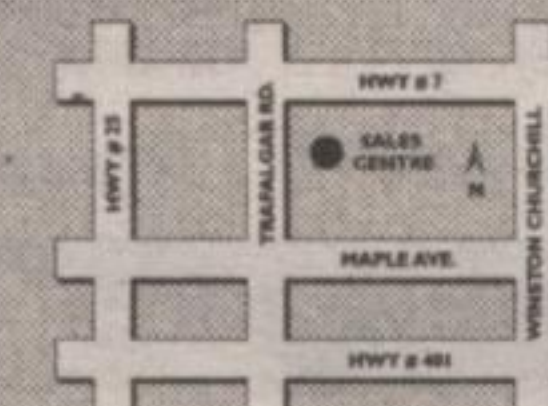


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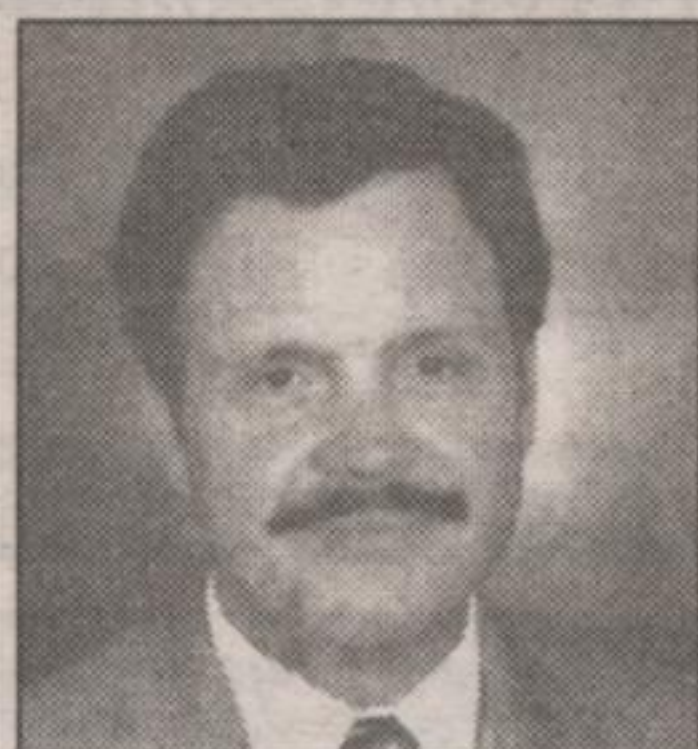


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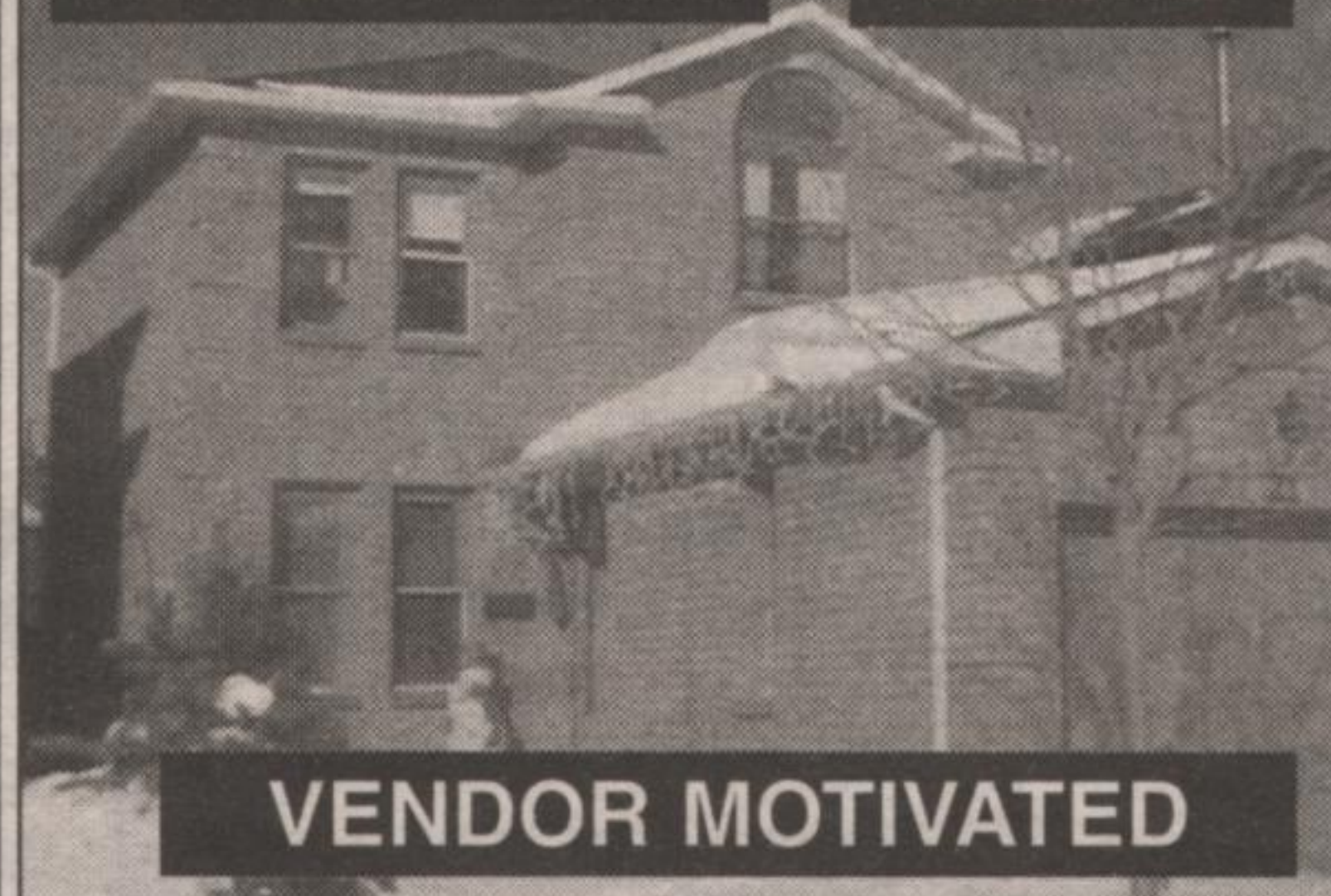
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