

Auxiliary police making house calls to offer break-in protection

By Stephanie Thiessen
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Protecting your home from burglars may be just a phone call away with Halton Regional Police's new Safeguard program.

Throughout April, auxiliary police officers are offering to visit residents' homes to give tips on how to prevent being targeted for break-ins.

"We want to decrease the number of break-ins in Milton," said Halton police Sgt. Kevin Mahar. "With Milton growing and expanding, Milton's no longer the small town it was. People need to realize that."

All residents need to do to arrange for this free, one-hour session is pick up the phone and call the hotline, Mahar said, adding most visits will take place on weekends.

About 25 auxiliary — volunteer — officers have received training in how to conduct the checks, Mahar said, which

will operate in urban and rural Milton.

"Rural areas can be vulnerable given the isolation, so we encourage rural residents to call as well," he said.

If this pilot project is successful in Milton, it could grow to include other communities.

The program will focus on the exterior of the home.

Crime prevention through environmental design is one of the goals of the program.

Officers will evaluate residents' homes and give advice on how their yards and homes can look less inviting to burglars, Mahar said.

For example, how a resident landscapes a yard can make all the difference on whether a home is targeted. If trees and shrubs prevent the doorway from being visible from the street, it has a greater chance of being hit, as it does if newspapers are littered around, making the culprit aware the owners aren't home.

The second part of the Safeguard program is making a

home difficult to be broken into if it is targeted, Mahar said. Much of what officers will recommend can be implemented with a trip to the hardware store, he said, like getting a new lock.

"A lot of things will be really simple things they can do themselves," Mahar said.

At the end of the visit, homeowners will receive a list of things they can do to improve the security of their house.

Every homeowner can benefit from the program, Mahar said.

"I'm sure if they came to my house they'd find things I don't even see," he said.

To make an appointment for the one-hour session, call (905) 825-4747, ext. 5247.

Stephanie Thiessen can be reached at sthiessen@miltoncanadianchampion.com.

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