



Hamilton Police Department  
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## Burglary Prevention

The following information is brought to you by the Hamilton Police Department in an effort to protect our local businesses from costly break-ins. Each year in Hamilton a number of burglaries occur to our local businesses. Although the Hamilton Police department works diligently to patrol our community and to investigate these crimes when they occur, local business owners often find it difficult and expensive to recover after suffering a loss from a burglary. We have put together the following list of information and tips that you might use to prevent your business from being victimized.

- **Lighting:** Lighting both the inside and outside of your business is a great place to start. Motion activated lights are an inexpensive, energy efficient and a very effective tool in preventing break ins.
- **Alarm systems:** Alarm systems come in many styles and prices. Often, an alarm is thought to be something that always carries a monthly bill; however several options are available including alarms that provide notification via cell phone, e-mail, or text message. Other alarms are motion activated and simply provide an audible alarm to frighten away a would-be burglar. These styles of alarms may be a more cost effective solution for many small business owners. If you have an alarm system which utilizes an alarm company, please take the time to ensure that your contact list is up to date with the alarm company so that we can contact you or one of your staff members if there is an alarm at your business. "Beware: Alarm System Present" window and door stickers should be displayed and have been documented in local cases as having prevented burglaries. These stickers are available through alarm companies or for purchase from several locations.
- **Locking up:** Ensure that you or your staff members have a routine check list or something in place to ensure that all of your windows and doors are secured each day at the close of business. Window mounted air conditioners are a frequent access point used by burglars. If your business uses one of these units, consider another option or consider removing it while the business is closed.
- **Locks:** Check your locks, door frames, dead bolts, window locks, and any other access points for your building. Ensure that your locks meet your needs, and are in good repair. Make it time consuming and noisy for a burglar to break into your business. Install deadbolt locks on all exterior doors. Install double key locks (a key required inside and out) on all doors which contain glass. This prevents a burglar from breaking the glass and reaching in to open the door. A faulty lock or a door with an inadequate lock may allow a burglar easy access and provide them with an easy means to commit a crime.
- **Security cameras:** Video evidence is something that most burglars take into consideration and try to avoid. The cost of Digital Video Recorders has dropped drastically in the past couple of years making video surveillance systems much more affordable. These systems can be purchased from local retailers and many of them can be installed in a relatively short period of time. Security camera placement is also important. Anytime a video system is installed, we recommend that a camera or two is also placed outside to cover any parking areas or entrances that the business may have. Times are tight financially for many businesses, so if a security camera system isn't in the budget, several simulated cameras are available that can help detour criminal activity at a very low price.

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- **Minimize your loss:** Keeping valuable items and/or cash in your business at night increases not only the likelihood of your business being burglarized, but it also increases the amount of loss that a business might suffer if they are victimized. Moving valuable items and cash to a secure location or removing them from the business at night is highly encouraged whenever possible. Burglars often spend time watching businesses and this method has also been documented as having prevented burglaries in Hamilton.
- **Inventory and serial numbers:** Having a current inventory of products or items that might be taken in the event of a burglary can be valuable and save time. This list provides us with prompt information to use in the course of the investigation, and also provides you with good information for any insurance claims that may follow. Always document the make, model and serial numbers from business items such as laptop computers, scanners, printers and other electronics. Photographing these items and these numbers is an easy and quick way to do this. Having these numbers allows investigators to search databases for the stolen items and provides solid proof when a stolen item is located.
- **Update responder list:** The Ravalli County 911 Dispatch Center maintains a list of businesses and their contact information. In the event that something occurs at business, or if it is found to be insecure, this list is used to contact the owner or staff members. If you have not done so, please take the time to contact the dispatch center at 363-3033 and provide them with an up to date list of one or two contacts for you and/or your staff members.
- **In the event of a burglary:** If your business falls victim to a burglary here are some tips on what to do, and what to expect. If you arrive at your business and observe that it has been broken into, please stop and call 911. An Officer will respond to your business and ensure that no one is still inside. Do your best to keep people out of the business and don't touch or move things. This will maximize the opportunity for investigators to obtain as much evidence as possible. Many pieces of evidence are not as noticeable as you might think and we work hard and do our best to solve each case.

Take the time to "think like a burglar". Look over your own business both during the daylight hours and after dark. Look for easy access, dark areas, and valuable items in view. Take the time to ensure that any exterior lighting is working properly and consider what you might do to prevent a burglar from even considering burglarizing your business.

Can we help? If you would like to schedule a Detective to come to your business and conduct a walkthrough with you, please feel free to contact us. We are always willing to share our advice, knowledge and experience to help prevent crimes. Feel free to contact us with any other questions that you might have and thank you for time and support.