

Nine Out of 10 Americans Are Vulnerable to Home Break-Ins

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<?xml version="1.0"?> Nine Out of 10 Americans Are Vulnerable to Home Break-Ins State Farm(R) Identifies Misconceptions about Entry Points for Burglars, Finds Front Doors Overlooked BLOOMINGTON, Ill., Dec. 4

BLOOMINGTON, Ill., Dec. 4 /PRNewswire/ -- State Farm released findings of a national survey today revealing that nine out of 10 Americans are unaware that front doors are the No. 1 entry points for burglars(1), leaving homes vulnerable to break-ins. State Farm conducted the survey to identify common safety practices and help families take the correct measures to protect their homes.

(Logo: <http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20061017/CGTU039LOGO-b>)

In 2007, the average paid claim for stolen personal property was more than \$5,000, according to State Farm, which insures one in every five homes. Findings from the survey indicate that Americans are putting their personal properties at risk because they often leave key entry points unprotected:

- Less than half lock their front door at all times
- Nearly half have left their windows open
- 33 percent have left their back doors unlocked
- Nearly 3 in 10 hide a key outside their house, such as under a doormat
- 22 percent have left their inside garage doors unlocked

"The most important thing people can do to deter break-ins is to make sure all their home entrances are locked at all times," said Betsy McDermeit, State Farm Underwriting Analyst. "The second thing people can do to ensure security is to ensure doors have good quality locks that have deadbolts. Too often we see burglaries that could have been prevented with higher-quality locks."

The FBI estimates more than 2 million burglaries occurred in 2007, of which nearly 61 percent involved forcible entry. Many Americans assume state and city building codes require a level of quality and security for the door locks installed on their homes. However, most building codes don't even require a lock on exterior doors, let alone require a level of quality. This leaves personal safety and property protection in the hands of consumers, who are likely to be unaware of the safest locks and hinges for their homes.

To help protect homes against thieves, researchers at State Farm's Building Technology Research lab test various grades of door locks and hinges through a standardized weight test to identify optimal front-door safety measures. The test simulates the force that burglars use to enter homes.

State Farm researchers recommend windows and doors are kept locked at all times and warns consumers to be careful if they leave keys outside as most burglars know to check common hiding places, such as under doormats or flower pots. Additionally, Americans should consider the following door upgrades to reinforce their safety and help deter unwanted intruders:

- Deadbolt -- a deadbolt extends farther into the strike plate than a latch bolt and is manually operated by either a thumb-turn or by key.
- American National Standards Institute (ANSI) Grade 1 classification -- the ANSI has standards that measure the security and durability of door locks; Grade 1 is the best and most secure lock.
- Key control -- many manufacturers offer locks using keys that cannot be copied, except by certain locksmiths or only by the manufacturer.
- Reinforce door jambs -- materials and techniques are available that will help strengthen the door jamb and hinge points, making it more difficult to gain entry.
- Heavy-duty strike plates -- A heavy-duty deadbolt lock with a

heavy-duty strike plate can be installed using three-inch screws that penetrate the wall stud.

The survey found that more than 25 percent of people haven't taken an inventory of their personal goods in more than two years. Additionally, nearly 30 percent can't remember or have never taken stock of their belongings. State Farm recommends that people review their insurance policies and conduct regular home inventories to ensure they're adequately covered in the event of a burglary.

For additional tips and full home safety recommendations visit statefarm.com(R).

About State Farm

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(1) National Burglar & Fire Alarm Association, 2005.

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