

# Police in Midlothian issue security advice to residents



Police in Midlothian are issuing the following home security advice to residents as the darker nights set in.

No one has the right to break into your home, but there are steps you can take to reduce your chances of being a victim of housebreaking.

Thieves often consider communal closes or stairwells to be weak points that they can exploit, as people may be less likely to challenge who they are and why they are there. If your home is accessed via a communal close or stairwell always make sure entry points are locked behind you, don't let anyone you don't know follow you through a controlled entry point, and don't buzz people in who you don't know or who claim to be visiting another resident. Talk to your landlord or housing association about additional security measures if you have any concerns about your building.

Many thieves are opportunistic and doors and windows should always be secured. Don't leave keys in places where potential intruders may be able to find them or reach them, such as under mats or on the inside of door locks. Make sure that curtains are drawn before bed so any presents under the tree are kept out of plain sight this Christmas. Don't let people into your home who you are not expecting and who can't or won't provide identification. If you are unsure of a caller, or feel threatened or unsafe, ask them to leave and contact a trusted friend, relative, neighbour or police.

Keep hedges, walls and fences at the front of your property to a maximum of 1.2m in order to make it harder for an intruder to work unseen. Prevent easy access to the back and sides of

your property by installing locked gates. Ensure sheds and outbuildings are secured and property, such as bikes or tools, are kept inside rather than left in the garden. Motion-activated lights at entry points to your property or outbuildings can help to deter potential thieves and are available on the high street or online.

If you're planning on going on holiday or visiting family over the festive period, consider using Royal Mail's 'Keepsafe' service. They will keep your mail for up to 66 days so it doesn't pile up behind the door. This can be set up by visiting your local Post Office or calling 03457 777 888 at least 5 working days before your trip. Cancel any regular deliveries, such as milk or newspapers. Consider investing in a light switch timer, which is fitted over a light switch with no wiring or screws required. They can be set to turn your lights on and off at specific times so it seems as if someone is home, and can deter potential thieves from targeting your property. They can also be bought on the high street or online. We'd advise residents to register all their valuables with [Immobilise](#) that is supported by Police Scotland and helps officers identify the owners of recovered property.

Inspector Dryden is also issuing personal safety advice to members of the local community ahead of this year's festivities. Inspector Dryden said: "I'd urge residents to take note of our personal safety advice, as well as home safety advice, to ensure they have a safe and enjoyable time this Christmas."

If you're planning on consuming alcohol, always have something to eat first. Try to drink slowly; don't compete with others or be pressured into going at someone else's pace. Drink water or soft drinks in between alcoholic drinks. If you're going out for a meal, get some water for the table. Don't ever leave drinks unattended, or go back to drinks that have been left unattended. After a night out, avoid alcohol for at least 48 hours to give your body time to recover. Don't risk driving

the morning after excessive drinking, remember that your body will still be processing the alcohol and, although you may feel fine, you may still be over the legal limit.

Plan your journey home in advance. Let someone know how you plan on getting home and what time you expect to be back. Stick to well lit areas and avoid secluded areas or alleyways. If you're intending to get the bus, have a timetable on your person or saved in your phone. Know where you will be getting this from and what time the last bus is. Save the number of a reputable taxi company in your phone and make sure that when the taxi arrives its from the firm you are expecting. Never accept a lift from an unlicensed taxi or a stranger.

When you're approaching your vehicle or home make sure you have your keys either in your hand or a specific pocket so that you don't need to go through and search a handbag or all your pockets for them, as this can distract you from what is going on around you. Keep a note of useful numbers separate from your mobile just in case you lose it, and carry some change on your person instead of in your handbag in case you need to use a public phone. It's worth considering investing in a personal alarm to use if you feel threatened, however, if you don't have one and feel threatened shout for help.

For further information about home or personal security, please speak to a local officer, visit your local station, call Police Scotland on 101, visit the Keep Safe section of our website.