

Door Security

By Joseph Parish

It often will take only a single kick to force open a residential door. After spending multiple hours exploring the web in search of an improved lock system to prevent this from occurring, I found it almost impossible to locate anything to remedy the situation. The kind of lock I was seeking was one that you could "harden" for your entry into the home and make it difficult if not impossible for a criminal to obtain entry. I wanted something solid as opposed to the standard dead-bolt currently in use. Most entry products on the market today can easily be kicked in. You can purchase commercial security locks however most residential doors are simply not built to the proper thickness for the commercial style lock sets. In view of the difficulty in finding a desired lock I have created alternative methods of securing the doors of my home.

I took the liberty to talk at length with a friend who happens to be lock specialist dealing specifically with low-income apartment complexes. These complexes experience a large volume of kicked in doors on a daily basis. He stated that one of the easiest and cheapest methods that he knew for preventing the doors from being kicked in or the door jamb from being broken was to make sure that the screws which attach the bolt plate to the jamb go all the way to the stud that's behind the jamb. The method so described makes it harder for a burglar to obtain entry by simply replacing the standard ½ inch screws which attach the strike plate with longer 3-inch screws. The longer screws will permit the penetration of the door jamb within the frame. He would take and install 3 to 3 1/2" drywall screws in both the dead-bolt and the locking door knob jamb plates. His premises was that these screws were long enough to fully reach the 2 X 4 stud which proves more substantial than the material found within the jamb itself.

He related one instance where a drugged out, jealous ex-husband desperately wanted into his ex-wife's apartment which my friend had previously completed a reinforcement job on the door. To make a long story short the husband did gain entrance to the home but only after he had completely demolished the frame of the door pulling it out of the wall itself. The same procedure will work with the hinge plate screws as well. These 3 or 4 screws in each hinge are a mere ½ inch but by replacing them with 3-inch screws they can hold up to a lot more abuse. Consider having a 1/8" thick aluminum or steel 1.5" wide plate recessed within the door frame and attached with countersunk screws. By using this strategy, the entire door frame will take the hit.

Often people think that a stronger lock is in order but the reality of it all is that it is not the lock or dead-bolt itself but rather how well it has been attached to the opening. He further added that even a simple Kwik-set dead bolt cannot easily be comprised if installed properly. You should install a dead bolt on every exterior door of your home. Decide prior to the installation if the interior side should be opened by a key or by a handle.

Do not take this decision lightly as you should firmly consider the patterns of use in your home and the nearby window locations. One client of my friend who had their

home broke into installed their door's dead bolt in such a manner that it was not visible from the outside causing the burglar to view it as an easy entry. Since the client had experienced a break-in, they decided to have the door replaced with a metal reinforced jamb installed.

Multipoint locking systems provide another means by which you can thwart kick in of your door. These systems generally have three locks at different levels on the door and make it harder to kick the door in. The downfall of this arrangement is that three separate locking locations are good for keeping someone out while you are not home but it opens you up to a different sort of security risk factor. When you arrive home late in the evening it will take time for you to open the three separate locks. You must also take time to find the proper keys for each of the locks.

I was told that one individual designed their home specially to counter these issues. They situated the home in such a manner that they have had a 7 second line of sight for someone attempting to get to the door as well as a 3 second access to the either their front or back door. The decks on the house were created so that it takes 3 turns in order to maneuver to the door level. The homebuilder installed several removable access points at one end of each decks which is used for loading or unloading furniture but these points are designed so that if the screws were to be removed the sides would not stay up on their own.

Naturally, if the money is available buy a stronger door. Look for a door rated to withstand hurricane forces. These are perfect for protecting your home from burglars. Therma-Tru Company will test its reinforced fiberglass door by projecting 2 x 4' towards it at 30 mph. Those doors which employ glass in them will arrive with hurricane rated impact glass as well. As a homeowner you should use the same steps that you would to secure your side and rear doors as you would use for your front door.

When a burglar considers entering a home their choice of door depends upon several criteria. They consider how attractive the door may be. Is there shrubbery near the front entry which might make it more appealing, are there dogs in the backyard making the rear door less desirable? Give some very serious thought to purchasing several .50 cent door jamps. If you doubt the effectiveness that these items have you can have a friend jam one under your door and try to open it. The hinges on the door will bust the door gives way.

Lock bumping presents a particular problem for securing doors so always install bump proof locks. These locks are specifically designed not to allow the simultaneous alignment of all the lock pins when suddenly jarred. Do not be fooled by pick proof locks that clam bump proof capabilities. Read the label on the lock very carefully. There are several brands of bump-proof locks that you can purchase such as Schlage Primus, Assa, Medeco or Mul-T-Lock. Generally, the price of these locks starts around the \$100 range.

So now you have beefed up your doors to the point that the burglar cannot get thought they will likely avoid the door and pick up something and toss it through the

window. On the subject of windows, you could use the windows which comply with the Florida hurricane standards. These are the ones that are resistant to hammer hitting.

Lastly let's look at low tech security as a means of keeping an intruder out. Perhaps we could use a medieval method of barring the door? With such a method in place even breaking the lock as well as the hinges would not dislodge your door enough to allow entry. Obviously, this method would only benefit you if you were at home. Defending your home while you are away is of course less important from the safety standpoint. If someone were to break in and steal your furnishings while you are gone you are only out money.

To bar the door from the inside you only need to drill a hole in the floor in front of the door and drop in a bolt which is an inch or two longer than the hole. The point here is you must remove the bolt in order to open the door and this makes it more difficult to kick it in. In fact, you could likely drill 2 or 3 holes off-set so if the first array of kicks breaks one bolt those that follow will hit another bolt a few inches to the side.