

## Crime Prevention Bulletin

### Guideline in discovering and dealing with intruders in your home

The thought of a stranger in your home is one of the worst nightmares most people can imagine. It is highly unlikely to happen - most intruders are thieves who are keen to enter empty properties and leave as quickly as possible. If you come home to find an intruder in your property, or you awake to hear someone is in the house, there are several steps you can take to minimise the danger. This guideline is produced by Safe Communities Algarve based on the advice from a number of police forces including police here in Portugal.

#### If you arrive home and think there is a **BURGLAR** inside your house

- ✚ Do not under any circumstances enter your property.
- ✚ Dial 112 or if registered with the Safe Resident Program (SRP), call the Team on the area hotline.
- ✚ Go to a safe place and wait for the police to arrive to check your property before you re-enter. Don't worry about a 'false alarm', it is always better to be safe than sorry in these situations.

#### If you are at home and suspect there is a **PROWLER** in your grounds

- ✚ Dial 112 or the SRP hotline, activate your home security alarm if you have one - listen to what the police tell you to do
- ✚ If you are able to, without going outside, turn **on** all outside lights
- ✚ Turn **off** all inside lights
- ✚ Make a loud noise to frighten the prowler and alert your neighbours if you have any close by
- ✚ Await arrival of the police

#### If you wake up and suspect an **INTRUDER** in your home

- ✚ Get out of the property if you can and it is safe to do so - call 112 or the SRP hotline.
- ✚ If you cannot get out and you have a telephone/mobile in your bedroom, dial '112' or SRP hotline and give your address and details quickly and quietly. Listen to what the police tell you to do.
- ✚ At the same time lock the bedroom door and wedge a chair behind the handle if possible.
- ✚ If you do not have access to a phone, switch on your bedroom light and move about making as much noise as you can. If you are a female alone, call a man's name loudly. The chances are your intruder will run for it if disturbed.

## Finding an **INTRUDER** in your home

If you are in your home and encounter (face to face) an intruder, it is essential that you remain calm. Almost all intruders are burglars, and will be keen to get away without any confrontation or physical violence. Follow these simple points to minimise any trauma, and risk of personal injury.

- ✚ Do not shout or adopt a threatening pose.
- ✚ Make sure you are not blocking the intruder's escape route.
- ✚ Try and absorb details of appearance, approximate height and weight, eye and hair colour, clothing and shoes, and their accent.
- ✚ Speak as calmly as possible to the intruder but do not attempt at bluffing or aggression as this could easily escalate into violence.
- ✚ In a stressful situation it is better to comply with some of the demands they may make, but do not become overly compliant by offering more than they are demanding. Conversely do not refuse to comply as this could again result in violence either against you or family members.
- ✚ On no account attempt to physically attack the intruder, even if they appear smaller and weaker, they may be carrying tools, which can be used as weapons or indeed there may be several accomplices that you are not be aware of.

Allow the intruder to leave as soon as possible, but try and watch their direction on departure. Dial '112' or the SRP hotline and give as accurate a description as you can, and wait for the police.

## Use of a Personal Emergency Response System (PERS)

If you have a PERS device you can use this to obtain an emergency response. One major advantage of this in the last two scenarios, which are time critical, is that there may not be time to use a telephone even with speed dial settings. In very few cases have the police arrived at the scene before the departure of the culprits simply because the victims were not able to summon help in time. A PERS device if worn provides in these situations the emergency services to be summoned immediately.

## If You Are Attacked

Instances of homeowners being attacked by intruders are rare when compared to actual break-ins. Most burglars are looking for property to steal, and will avoid any physical confrontation. If you do come under attack, the law allows you to use reasonable force to defend yourself or another person. Your aim is to make the intruder leave, not to cause them actual harm through revenge. If you use unreasonable force you are committing a crime. Articles 32 and 33 of the Portuguese Penal Code (General Part) refer. If the intruder runs, do not give chase, dial '112' or the SRP hotline and wait for the police to arrive.

**Remember – You can replace your possessions but not your life!**

Disclaimer - SCA accepts no liability for the advice produced in this leaflet which is of a general nature. Each situation is different and this is produced as a general guide only.