



### Crime Prevention Tip of the Day: STRANGER AT THE DOOR

If you are not expecting anyone at your front door, the ring of the doorbell or knock at the door is a little surprising. Fight the urge to blindly open the door to see who it is or what it is they want. Don't automatically open the door. Obviously if you know/trust the person on the other side, that's a different situation.

There are several different types of criminals that might knock at the door first to see if you are home. One is the home burglar who is casing the residence. If they think no one is at home, they may go ahead and try to break in. Generally, burglars don't want a confrontation with anyone inside. They also don't want witnesses. They want to get in and out undetected and move on. If they perceive your house to be a tough mark (i.e., someone home, alarm system, video surveillance, dog at home, etc.), then they will probably move on to an easier home to get into.

Another type is the "con artist", who wants you to answer the door so they can give you a sob story and try to scam you out of a few dollars. It could be a "harmless looking female" who seems to be in a panic and tells a story like, "I live a few streets from here and my mom was just in a car accident in (whatever city here). They don't think she is going to make it and I don't have enough gas to get to whatever city. Can I have a few dollars so I can get a cab?"

They will give you an address that is a few streets over and maybe even give a name to gain your trust. It's not that hard to pick a house, look in the mailbox to get a name, and then go a few streets over to start the scam.

#### **If you have a house full of people or you are at home by yourself, here are some recommendations:**

- **Don't open the door first.** If you have a peephole, use it.
- **If no peephole, look out the window** to try to get a visual on whom it is.
- **Talk to them THROUGH the door!** Ask them, "Who are you, what do you want?" If it is a potential burglar, this will deter them from breaking in. If you ignore the knock and try to pretend no one is home, this is what they are looking for and might try to break in.
- **If they claim to need help or assistance,** tell them that you are calling Hoover Police and do so (non-emergency 822-5300). It's our job and we want to help someone if they truly are in need of assistance. However, if it is someone that is trying to scam you, then we want to deal with that too. **DO NOT GIVE THEM MONEY OR LET THEM INSIDE YOUR HOUSE FOR ANY REASON!**
- **If you are a female at home alone,** tell them that your husband (or father if you are younger) is fixing the bathroom sink and cannot be bothered right now (or similar story). This lets them know (they don't HAVE to know the truth) that a man is at home.
- **If you are ever unsure or uncomfortable** with the situation, call us. It's our job and you are not bothering us. If it bothers you, it bothers us. 911 for emergencies, 822-5300 for non-emergencies.



### **Other Prevention Tips:**

- **Have a dog.** This is the original four-legged “alarm system”. Allow the dog to ‘tell’ the person at the door that a dog lives there too. If it is a potential burglar, they will not want to deal with a dog and move on to easier prey.
- **Have an intercom system speaker system** for two-way communication without having to open the door. These are inexpensive and effective.
- **Have a security camera or video surveillance**, and have signs announcing that you have it. This enables you to see who is at the door without opening it, and also deters potential burglars from breaking in.
- **Have an alarm system.** You can either have a system that is monitored by a company or not, it’s up to you (and also depending on your budget). Also have signs announcing that you have one. A system that isn’t monitored by a company is also an option. These can still be effective by giving off a loud audible alarm or bright strobe lights if a detection is made.
- **Make sure the deadbolt/security chain** is set. Be sure that the door chain mounting bracket and the “strike plate” for the deadbolt on the door frame are attached with long (3” minimum) screws. This makes it more difficult for someone to bust through.
- **Get your neighborhood involved in Neighborhood Watch.** Neighborhood Watch is a proven inexpensive way for you to not only meet/know your neighbors, but also to deter/prevent crime. If you have a Homeowner’s Association, have them contact Hoover Police to help set up a Watch in your area. If you don’t have an HOA, talk to your neighbors about forming a neighborhood watch group for your area . You can get more info on Neighborhood Watch in Hoover: <http://www.hooverpd.com/neighborhood-watch.php>
- **See other HOME SECURITY tips** here: <http://www.hooverpd.com/crime-prevention.php>