

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS FOR SOUTH AFRICA

# SAFETY, SECURITY & COMMUNITY

Layered security, neighbour awareness, family protection and local community preparedness.



## LAYERED SECURITY

- DETER
- DETECT
- DELAY
- RESPOND

## FAMILY EMERGENCY PLAN



## COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS

- SHARE INFORMATION
- CHECK ON VULNERABLE
- POOL RESOURCES
- TRAN TOGETHER
- BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

## HOME SECURITY

- SECURE DOORS & WINDOWS
- GOOD LIGHTING
- ALARM SYSTEMS
- DOGS AS DETERRENT
- SAFE ROOM / SHELTER
- PRACTISE LOCKDOWN

## AWARENESS

- KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOURS
- REPORT SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY
- STAY INFORMED
- BE OBSERVANT
- TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS
- AVOID PREDICTABLE PATTERNS

## FAMILY PROTECTION

- COMMUNICATION PLAN
- MEETING POINTS
- EMERGENCY CONTACTS
- ROLE ASSIGNMENTS
- KEEP KIDS INFORMED
- REGULAR DRILLS

## COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS

- FORM NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH
- SHARE SKILLS & RESOURCES
- CREATE SUPPORT NETWORKS
- PLAN TOGETHER
- STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY TIES

### EMERGENCY CONTACTS

NEIGHBOURS  
COMMUNITY LEADERS  
MEDICAL ASSISTANCE  
SECURITY CONTACT

IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

STRONG FAMILIES  
STRONG COMMUNITIES

## 15 SAFETY AND SECURITY



### **"61 House robberies and 676 house breakings a day in South Africa - how these thugs operate and how to protect your property and loved ones."**

Translated 'Vrouekeur' Article | 1/11/2017

*"According to the most recent crime figures released this week by the SAPS, the number of house robberies and housebreakings in South Africa remains concerningly high, with 22 343 robberies and 246 654 burglaries reported during 2016/17.*

*'These statistics are shocking - on a daily basis, an average of 61 homes are robbed and 676 are affected by housebreakings. And it's just taking into account incidents that are reported to the police,' says Virseker spokesperson Elmarie Twilley. 'We are urging South Africans to be more vigilant than ever and to ensure that their homes are kept safe as possible. Not only to protect their possessions, but also themselves and their loved ones.'*

*Research by Professor Rudolph Zinn of UNISA's School of Criminal Law and Police - who conducted in-depth interviews with 30 convicted robbers - reveals the following key insights about who these criminals are and how they operate:*

- *Most of these robbers were men in their early 20s.*
- *They usually work in groups of 4.*
- *Each criminal acknowledged guilt on an average of 103 crimes.*
- *Their motivation was mainly financial gain.*
- *They choose their targets based on wealth and how profitable a robbery would be.*
- *The majority of criminals said they received information from inside - often via domestic workers, gardeners and security guards.*
- *All offenders said they would spend a lot of time beforehand to monitor movements in and out of the property.*
- *Low security and availability of escape routes are important, but criminals will face any target if they see it as valuable enough.*

### 15.1.1.1 DISCUSS SAFETY AND SECURITY WITH YOUR FAMILY

Let everyone, including older children, talk to each other about their fears and what they think the home needs to make their home a safer place.

### 15.1.1.2 GENERAL SAFETY MEASURES THAT MUST BE IMPOSED

- Front doors must not be opened for strangers under any circumstances.
  - Talk through the door and first determine if you have business with the stranger e.g. a postman who delivers a post
  - Do not open the door for someone who asks for food, money or work.
- Front doors must never be opened by minors. Criminals can easily seduce young children or obtain information from them. Keys are never left in doors; the keys are out of reach of doors and windows.

## 15.2 THE THREE LAYERS OF DEFENSE

Designing a home defence system that includes multiple layers is a proactive way to protect your family, home and belongings. Security layers are preventative measures that will advertise to intruders that they should avoid your home altogether. The more layers you have in and around your home, the less likely a criminal is going to be to target your home for his/her next “job.”

### 15.2.1 LAYER 1: THE OUTSIDE LAYER

This layer consists of the outer perimeter of your home. Due to certain architectural designs of houses (doors with decorative windows, sliding doors, etc.), today's homes are more vulnerable than before.

Installing visible preventative measures around your home will keep thugs on guard. Walk around your house regularly to see if there are any vulnerable areas. Small exterior modifications can help protect your home from the outside. One of the most vulnerable parts of your home is the windows.



A heavy chair can easily be thrown through a window, smashed it, creating easy access. Investing in a break-resistant window film or burglar bars is a possible solution.

Let the exterior of your home look more resilient to criminals with the following alterations:

- 1) Thorny bushes under windows.
- 2) "Beware of the dog" signs at your gate as well as your garage door (even if you don't have a dog)
- 3) Place burglar bars in front of all windows and Trellidors in front of all doors. If you can afford it, install aluminium storm shutters in front of all your windows.
- 4) Security Company or neighbourhood watch signs at your front gate's pillar or above your garage door.
- 5) Infrared-moving lights on the boundaries of your yard and garden walls.
- 6) A security camera pointing to the front door (even a fake one with a flickering light can fend off thugs).

### 15.2.2 LAYER 2: THE INSIDE LAYER

Preventative safety measures can help to ensure the safety of your home. Layer two (2) focuses on the resilience of your home thereby making it more difficult for thugs to access.



- 1) Install an alarm with panic buttons with enough infrared eyes in various rooms.
- 2) Join a trusted security company that can monitor your alarm and provide armed response.
- 3) Place hidden cameras (webcams) strategically throughout your home. Make sure the cameras can connect to the Internet and store imagery in cyberspace. This will prevent the burglars from destroying the footage. You can even view the footage on your cell phone.
- 4) Add a 2-way voice function to your existing alarm system. With this feature, your security system can communicate directly via the control panel. This feature also allows you to have remote access and turn on your system and listen to any activity or conversations of your child or other family members at home.
- 5) Make sure your doors are secure. (a metal or solid core door is the best)
- 6) Reinforce the door frame. A door is as strong as the frame it holds in place.
- 7) If your doors are made of glass, cover the glass with a shatterproof film.
- 8) Install a double cylinder lock on all outside doors.
- 9) Keep wallets, car keys, money and jewellery away from windows. These items may be visible from the outside.
- 10) Place a peephole in the front and rear doors.
- 11) Place a pipe or metal bar in the sliding door track to prevent it from forced open. The pipe must be the same length as the track when the door is closed.
- 12) Put anti-lift locks or sliders on all sliding doors and sliding windows.

### 15.2.3 LAYER 3: THE PERSONAL LAYER

This layer is the most critical layer, because it is based on all the procedures, defence training and emergency plans you have set up. The personal layer is also the only layer you can take with into the outside world. If you walk and someone is trying to attack you, you will be able to use your self-defence training as well as emergency procedures to avert the attack.



The personal layer is the final layer of defence. If all your deterrents and preventative measures are not enough to keep a determined intruder out of your home, then you have to take action to defend yourself and your family. It is wise to have several strategies to defend yourself. If the first strategy fails, always be prepared to have a backup strategy.

- Learn self-defence: Find a class that specializes in quick response techniques such as 'Krav Maga' of 'Wing Chun'.
- Get a firearm and learn how to use it safely and accurately. Go to the shooting range regularly and practice on a regular basis.
- Learn to improvise. Your home is full of other repellents like:
  - Hot coffee
  - Fire extinguisher
  - Hair spray
  - Cricket bat or hockey stick
  - Salt to throw in the eyes
  - Kitchen knives
  - Make sure your family knows the necessary emergency numbers by heart. Teach them how to calmly explain the emergency situation to a trained person.
  - Show your family how to use different escape routes to their advantage if they have to leave home.

## 15.3 FURTHER SAFETY TIPS IN AND AROUND THE HOUSE

### 15.3.1 AT NIGHT

- 1) Close all blinds and curtains after dark so that criminals cannot see into your home.
- 2) Activate the alarms for outside as well as the inside for the rooms that you don't use at night.
- 3) If you have to leave your home in the evening, leave a radio or TV on. Leave on the outside lights as well as 1 – 2 lights on the inside of the house.
- 4) Do not install your Flat Screen TV where it is visible from the street



### 15.3.2 GET TO KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOURS

- 1) Make sure that you have a relationship with your neighbours and that you have their contact details.
- 2) Avoid putting keys under planter boxes, rugs or in false rocks. If you must leave an extra key, the best option is to leave a set of keys with your trustworthy neighbour.
- 3) Ask your neighbour to help with the following in case you go away for a weekend or holiday:
  - Take in refuse bins so they are not left on the street for longer than necessary.
  - Empty your mailbox so post is not left in the post box for more than one day.

### 15.3.3 BE ALERT

- 1) Be alert when you get home. Look at your surroundings and make sure that you are not being watched.
- 2) Do not place newly purchased equipment's cartons / packaging outside your yard (display / advertise) for removal.
- 3) Obtain a street number plate and install it for the neighbourhood watch to easily find your home.
- 4) Do not fall for "sales jokes" or "repairs gimmick" tricks. Tell them to make an appointment, even though they wear Telkom, Eskom or police clothing.
- 5) Don't allow any strangers at or near your home (day or night). Strange visitors have strange plans. Get outside help and don't be curious by going outside to find out what's going on.
- 6) Arrange and communicate all these emergency measures with your family and neighbours. Speak regularly with neighbours and friends about activities in your area. Keep cell phones ready in case landlines get cut.
- 7) Keep all emergency services, SAPS, Neighbourhood Watch, Farm Guard and emergency numbers on all the cell phones in the house and call for outside assistance first asking them to secure your property. Don't go outside by yourself!



### 15.3.4 PREFERABLY STAY INSIDE

- 1) Don't go outside to see why the outside tap runs - the taps won't open by itself. Phone for help.
- 2) Do not go outside alone when your vehicle's alarm goes off – there may be someone waiting for you!
- 3) Don't open for someone that came for "help" or is "injured" that you don't know. Call the emergency units such as police or ambulance and keep your doors locked.
- 4) Do not just open for the "police" if they knock on your door. Call the nearest police station and get confirmation and full details.
- 5) Don't go out to see why the dogs are barking. Stay in and call the neighbourhood watch or police.
- 6) Do not go out if puppies are placed on your porch or at your front door while they make noise from being hungry or cold. Rather call your nearest SAPS or neighbourhood watch to investigate - this can be a snare!
- 7) If you are on a smallholding or farm, do not respond to a "help call" by workers at night - make arrangements for them to call you in crisis times and then call the ambulance or police!

## 15.4 SAFETY MEASURES FOR YOUR WIFE AND CHILDREN



### 15.4.1 WHEN YOUR WIFE IS HOME ALONE

- 1) Keep doors, patio doors, sliding doors closed while doing domestic work.
- 2) If you work in the front of your home, make sure the back or side doors are locked.
- 3) If you sit or work on the patio or in the garden, make sure the rest of the house's doors and window are shut.
- 4) If you work or relax in the area near your back door, make sure the front door and / or side doors are locked.
- 5) Don't open the front door to any strangers, talk through the door.
- 6) If you relax in front of the TV, please close the whole house. Do not first open all windows and patio doors when you relax – just open up the room where you are, if needed.
- 7) Do not open your whole house on hot summer days while you relax next to the pool area.
- 8) Generally, be ready and be aware of the different sounds of the neighbourhood and your home.
- 9) Keep pepper spray handy in your kitchen or bedroom or in the area where you work or relax.
- 10) If you have to drive after dark, keep pepper spray within reach in the car.

### 15.4.2 SAFETY OF YOUNG CHILDREN

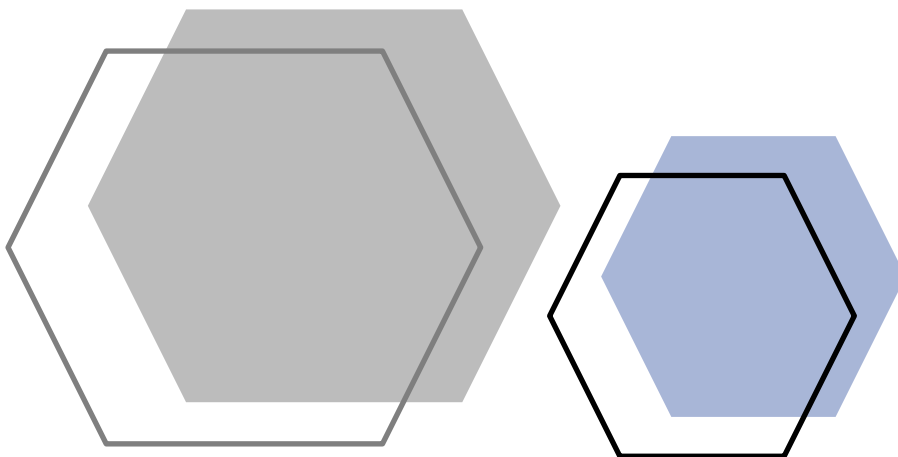
- 1) Young children should never answer the phone. They can easily be manipulated to disclose information.
- 2) Teenagers that are home alone after school must get into the habit of keeping doors closed, especially when watching movies or playing loud music, because they won't be aware if criminals come inside the house.



#### 15.4.3.1 TEENAGERS IN PUBLIC

Teenage girls that move around in public must always be on the alert. Here are a few factors that teenagers must bear in mind:

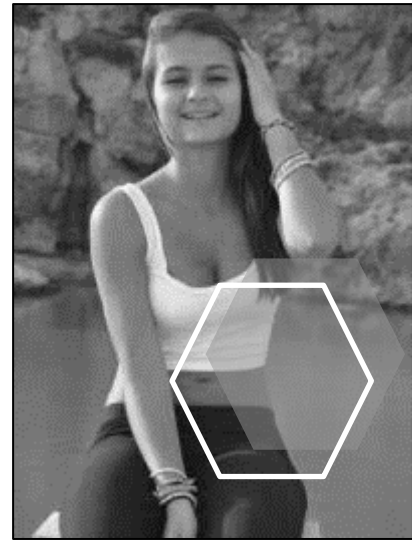
- 1) Make sure that you are aware who is walking behind you.
- 2) If a group of men make you feel uncomfortable, avoid them and walk the other way.
- 3) If a person looks suspicious, stay in open public places and not alone or in side streets.
- 4) If it is too dark to walk home, call your parents to come fetch you or have an adult walk with you to your home.
- 5) Make sure that your cell phone is always charged and that you have enough airtime and data.
- 6) Don't show your MP3 player, phone, or wallet in public.
- 7) Don't play loud music on your earphones so that you can't hear anything.
- 8) Use your cell phone only in safe places.



### 15.4.3.2 TEENAGERS ARE A SOFT TARGET

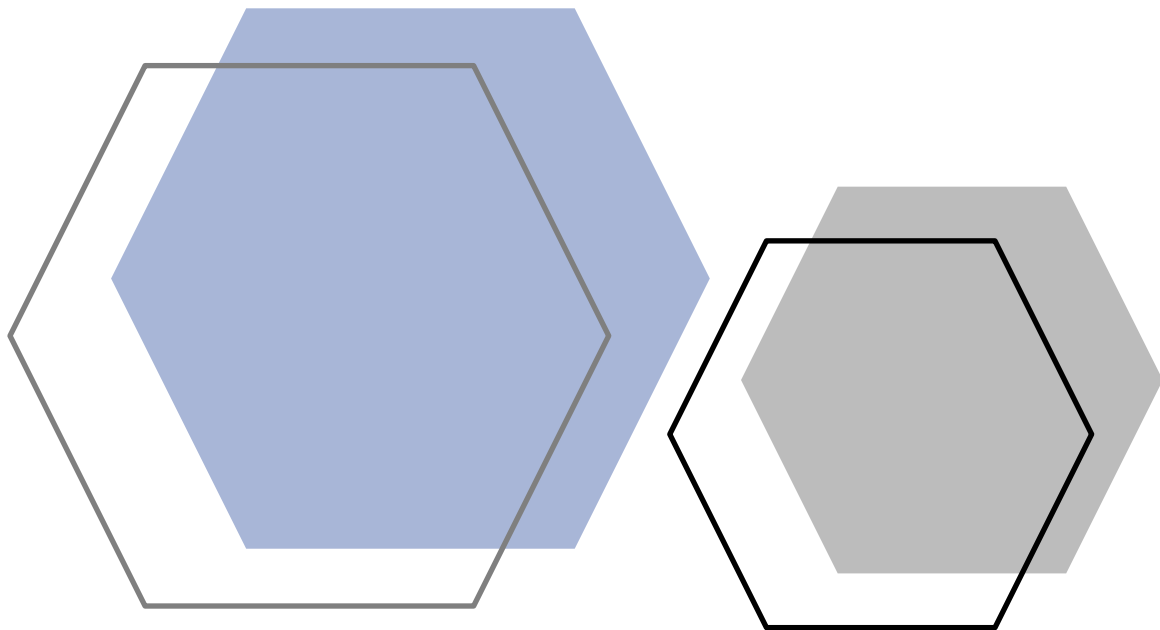
Teenage girls must be vigilant and be made aware that criminals see woman and teenage girls as soft targets.

- 1) Girls should be aware that high heels, short skirts or short tops and very low pants can be tempting for sex offenders and drunk men.
- 2) Girls never walk anywhere after dark on their own.
- 3) Girls should not wear high heels if they have to walk far; it will be harder to run away in an emergency situation.
- 4) All teenagers should preferably be dropped off and fetched by car, don't be too lazy to transport your teens for social events – they have the right to socialise.
- 5) Older teenage girls should carry pepper spray in their handbags or, preferably, hold it in their hand if they have to walk somewhere alone.



## 15.5 SUMMARY

- 1) Create the necessary emergency procedures and discuss them with your family. Make sure you include a list of emergency numbers and escape routes.
- 2) Take the time to walk through your home and garden and look through the eyes of a criminal. If you were to break into your house, how would you do that? Look for vulnerabilities. Do this to identify your weaknesses and then address them accordingly.
- 3) If you own a firearm, practice regularly by going to the shooting range. Also teach your family how to handle a firearm.
- 4) Purchase an alternative repellent such as pepper spray or even a taser.
- 5) Sit down with your family and discuss with your teenager the dangers if they are not careful and alert.



# 16 COMMUNITY AND NEIGHBOURHOOD PREPAREDNESS

There is an old African proverb that says: *“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”* Nowhere is this more true than in a survival situation. No matter how well prepared you are as an individual or a family, your safety and long-term resilience will always be stronger when you are connected to a prepared community around you.

Throughout this guide I have referred repeatedly to the importance of knowing your neighbours and working together. This chapter is dedicated entirely to that principle — because in a South African context, community preparedness is not just a nice idea. It is a survival strategy.

## 16.1 WHY COMMUNITY MATTERS IN A CRISIS



When a disaster strikes, the first people to reach you will not be emergency services. They will be your neighbours. Roads may be blocked, emergency lines overloaded and rescue teams overwhelmed. Studies conducted after major disasters consistently show that neighbours helping neighbours save more lives in the critical first hours than any other intervention.

South Africa already has a remarkable culture of community solidarity. Stokvels, church networks, neighbourhood watches, street WhatsApp groups and community policing forums are all expressions of our natural tendency to look out for one another. The goal of this chapter is to help you build on those existing structures and make them deliberately disaster-ready.

### 16.1.1 START WITH YOUR STREET

You do not need a formal organisation to begin. Start with the people closest to you — your immediate neighbours on either side and directly across the street. Have a simple conversation about emergency preparedness. You may be surprised to discover that others share your concerns and have skills or resources that complement your own.

Consider calling a simple get-together — a braai, a cup of coffee, an informal street meeting. Use it to discuss the following questions as a group:

- What are the most likely emergencies we face in our area?
- Who in our street has medical training or first aid knowledge?
- Who has a generator, a water tank or solar power?
- Who has elderly or disabled residents who will need extra help?
- What communication method will we use if cell networks go down?

### 16.1.2 DIVIDE SKILLS AND RESOURCES

One of the most powerful aspects of community preparedness is the ability to pool skills and resources. Consider dividing responsibilities according to what each household already has or knows:

- A neighbour with medical training becomes your street's first aid coordinator.
- A household with a large water tank can supply emergency water to immediate neighbours.
- Someone with a ham radio or two-way radio becomes the communication hub.
- A household with a generator can charge essential devices for the street.
- Someone with mechanical skills handles vehicle breakdowns during an evacuation.

This reflects the same principle the early church lived by.

**Acts 2:44-45:** *“All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.”*

In times of crisis, generosity and cooperation are not weaknesses. They are the foundations of survival.

### 16.1.3 USE EXISTING STRUCTURES

#### 16.1.3.1 NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

If your area has a neighbourhood watch, attend their meetings and raise the topic of emergency preparedness. Propose that the watch adds a disaster response protocol to its existing security mandate.

#### 16.1.3.2 CHURCH NETWORKS

Your local church is one of the most powerful community resources available. Churches have established trust, existing communication networks, physical meeting spaces and a culture of mutual support. Speak to your pastor or elder about whether your church has an emergency preparedness plan in place.

#### 16.1.3.3 WHATSAPP COMMUNITY GROUPS

Most South African streets and suburbs already have WhatsApp groups for security alerts. These same groups can be used for emergency communication during a crisis. Agree in advance on a protocol so that urgent messages stand out clearly from general conversation.

#### 16.1.3.4 STREET COMMITTEES AND HOAs

If your area has a homeowners' association or street committee, propose that emergency preparedness be added to the agenda. Even a simple one-page emergency plan agreed upon by the street is infinitely better than no plan at all.

#### 16.1.4 PLAN FOR YOUR MOST VULNERABLE NEIGHBOURS

Every community has members who are more vulnerable than others — the elderly, people with disabilities, single parents with young children, people with chronic illnesses. Before a crisis happens, identify who these individuals are in your immediate area. Make a conscious decision as a community to include them in your emergency planning. Assign a specific neighbour to check on each vulnerable person in the first hour of any emergency.

### 16.2 A WORD OF CAUTION

While community preparedness is vital, it must be approached with wisdom and discernment. Not everyone who knows about your preparations will be a trustworthy ally. In a prolonged crisis, desperation changes people. Share information about your supplies and resources carefully and only with those you genuinely trust. The goal is not to broadcast what you have but to build relationships of mutual trust and accountability before a crisis arrives.

### 16.3 SUMMARY

- **Start small** — begin with your immediate neighbours and build outward
- **Have the conversation** — a simple informal meeting is all it takes to start
- **Map your street's skills and resources** — know who can help with what
- **Use existing structures** — neighbourhood watch, church, WhatsApp groups and HOAs
- **Plan for the vulnerable** — identify and commit to looking after those who cannot look after themselves
- **Build trust before the crisis** — relationships formed in peace are strong