



*To organize and support  
community partnerships to prevent  
crime and the fear of crime*

4747 E. Burnside  
Portland, Oregon 97215

tel 503-823-4064  
fax 503-823-2909  
tty 503-823-6969

Amanda Fritz  
Commissioner

Amalia Alarcón de Morris  
Bureau Director

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ONI website:  
[www.portlandoregon.gov/oni/cp](http://www.portlandoregon.gov/oni/cp)



# Apartment Safety

Office of Neighborhood Involvement Crime Prevention Program  
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Everyone wants to feel a sense of security where they live. In addition to what a property management company can do to make your apartment complex a safer one, you also play an important role. By implementing crime prevention strategies in your unit, getting to know your neighbors, being vigilant, reporting problems as they occur, and taking actions that improve the safety of the common areas of the complex, you can make a significant contribution. In this brochure, we provide some security tips for apartment residents.

## ***What you can do to improve the safety of your unit***

When it comes to securing your apartment unit, it is a good idea to take steps to make it more difficult to access your unit and valuables. What you can do to increase the safety of your home:

- Secure access to your unit:
  - Make sure the locks are changed before you move in.
  - Lock your apartment door even if you are leaving for only a few minutes.
  - Don't provide spare keys to service people; be home to meet them.
  - Never hide a spare key under your doormat or on top of your doorframe or in your mailbox.
- Don't label your keys with your name and address. If you lose them, your home and complex will be vulnerable to burglary.
- Write only your last name or initials on your mailbox.
- Use the intercom or the peephole to identify visitors before opening your door.
- Secure sliding glass doors and windows with a dowel (rod) and track locks.
- Don't leave valuables in plain view of the windows of your apartment. Hide valuables in non-obvious places where burglars may not think to look.
- Keep porch lights on. This way if a suspicious person is outside of your unit, your neighbors will be able to observe what is happening and contact the police.
- Inventory the description, serial number and cost of your valuables. Keep a copy of your records online, in a fire-proof locked box or in a safe deposit box in a bank. Take pictures of your most valuable items. This will help you recover the items if they are stolen.
- Stay alert when entering your apartment. Don't talk on your cell

phone or look preoccupied when walking toward your building. Criminals look for a vulnerable target and are more likely to pass up someone who appears focused, aware and strong.

Burglars do not want to be caught. They tend to break into homes that are unoccupied when residents are out during the day or on vacation. Here are some tips on how to make your home appear occupied:

- Don't leave notes for roommates or guests on your door saying that you are gone but will be home at a certain time.
- Take in your newspaper and packages on a daily basis.
- Do not announce on social networking sites that you will be going on vacation or traveling for business.
- Leave your TV or radio playing during the day when you are away.
- Use timers to turn lights, radios, and televisions on and off.
- Arrange for a neighbor to pick up your mail from your mailbox so it doesn't pile up when you are on vacation.
- Stop your newspaper delivery when you are gone for more than one day.
- Have a friend visit the apartment for a couple of hours several times during your vacation so the apartment does not appear unoccupied.
- Tell a trusted neighbor or the building manager when you are going away so they can keep an eye on your apartment.

### ***Get to know your neighbors***

When you know your neighbors and the routines of your apartment complex and neighborhood, it is easier to identify and report suspicious activity. It also helps build a sense of community and pride in the place where you live. Here are some ideas to get connected.

- Form an Apartment Watch. If you live in Portland, call your crime prevention coordinator for information and training at 503-823-4064.
- Work with landlords, management, the tenants' association, or the board of directors to sponsor social events for residents.
- Let those neighbors who you trust know your schedule. This way they will be able to identify suspicious activity if someone is hanging around your apartment while you are away.
- Get to know your neighbors and the vehicles that they drive.
- Report suspicious behavior to management and the police (Call 9-1-1 for an immediate threat to life or property or a crime in



progress. Otherwise, you can call the non-emergency phone number to the police is 503-823-3333).

- Keep everyone informed of crime prevention tips and any incidents with a newsletter or listserv that also includes social news and information about the building.
- Say hello to people that you don't know and ask people who don't live there if you can help them. This shows that you are paying attention and that the neighbors are connected.

### ***Take care of the common areas***

You also play a role in insuring that the common areas of your apartment complex are well maintained and secure. Immediately reporting problems to management, staying vigilant over what's happening in these areas, and implementing proper security measures can contribute to a safer environment.

- Limit access to the building and garage:
  - Only let in to the building your guests or other residents.
  - If someone claims to be a guest of a resident in the building, have that resident confirm their identity and let them in. Even if you have seen the guest around the building before and have been introduced, you cannot be sure that the tenant is home or wants this person in the building.
  - When you enter the parking garage, make sure that no one is lurking around the entryway. If a person enters who is not a resident, you can contact the police.
  - Do not prop open doors.
  - Controlled access buildings are only secure if the common doors remain closed and locked when not in use.
  - Take your garage opener with you when you exit your car. If this is stolen it can be used to re-enter the garage to commit more crime.
- Report maintenance and security issues such as poor lighting, faulty locks, and overgrown shrubbery immediately to management.
- Lock up your bicycle even if you are storing it in a secure garage.
- Keep your car show room clean with nothing in it.
- Don't leave personal items in common areas.
- If you live in a large building or complex, think about a residents' patrol that watches for crime around the building.



Ask for the Crime Prevention Program Coordinator  
Serving Your Neighborhood  
503-823-4000  
[www.portlandoregon.gov/oni/cp](http://www.portlandoregon.gov/oni/cp)