

Personal Safety



in and around the home

The **SUZY**
LAMPLUGH Trust
The Leading Authority on Personal Safety



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“BT Home Monitoring is proud to support The Suzy Lamplugh Trust and to have assisted with the production of this guide. The importance of home security is sometimes underestimated, but with the help of this guide we can hopefully raise awareness of the issues and the many simple and affordable solutions available. BT Home Monitoring hopes that these useful personal safety tips will help keep you and your family safe in and around your home”

David Sales

Director BT Home Communications

We all like to feel safe and secure, especially in and around our own homes. Whether we live alone or with a partner, friends or family, keeping safe is something we all need to think about, but sometimes take for granted.

Personal safety is all about planning ahead, thinking about the possible risks and taking realistic, practical steps to avoid them if possible. No amount of precautions can make us completely safe but we can learn to avoid many of the dangers and learn how to react quickly when we are at risk.

This booklet outlines some of the many simple, practical steps we can take to improve personal safety in and around our homes.



Home Security

Try and look at your home through the eyes of a burglar, what can you see that would encourage or discourage someone from breaking in? Remember, half of all burglaries happen on the spur of the moment through unlocked doors or windows. Removing opportunities like this and taking some simple steps to make your home more secure could make all the difference.

- If you do not already have one, consider installing a security system.
- Safety lights that are triggered by movement can also be useful burglar deterrents.
- All external doors and windows should be fitted with secure locks. Mortice deadlocks are recommended, especially for final exits to your home.
- Try not to leave keys in a place where they can be seen from outside your home.
- Be careful, burglars often check to see if people have hidden spare keys outside their homes or put them on a string attached to the letterbox.
- Avoid attaching your name or address to keys. If they were lost or stolen, they could make a burglar's job very easy.



Outside Security

It is often possible to design the area immediately around your home to make it hard for intruders to enter your property. The following tips are fairly simple and inexpensive ways of improving security without making your home look like a fortress.

- Make sure garages and other out buildings are secure. Be especially careful that any tools and ladders are locked away out of sight.
- Thorny shrubs can be added to hedges or planted under windows to discourage intruders.
- Gravel and pebbles on driveways and paths will help you to hear people approaching.
- Trellis is fairly fragile and if it is added to the top of fences makes them difficult to climb.
- Good outdoor lighting is a great way of deterring intruders.



Outside Your Home

Whenever you are out and about you should try to be alert and aware of your surroundings – this can be just as important in your own neighbourhood as in an area you don't know.

- Watch out for people acting suspiciously. If you think someone is following you home or hanging around near your front door then make for a place where there are other people you can ask for help.
- Predictable behaviour can make you an easier target for criminals. If possible, try to vary the times that you come and go and the routes that you take.
- Cutting back hedges and trees around your home makes it difficult for anyone to conceal themselves.
- Try and have your keys ready when you approach your home, so you don't have to fumble in bags or pockets for them on your doorstep.



Going Away

Burglars prefer to break into empty properties so, whether you are going out for a short while or going away on holiday, you need to take precautions.

- Close all windows and doors whenever you leave your home. Many people forget to close their windows, especially in hot weather.
- Consider using a timer switch within your home to switch on some lights and perhaps a radio while you are away. If you are going out at night, you might want to draw the curtains and turn a light on so it looks like someone is at home.
- If you are going away on holiday, try not to tell too many people or to make your departure too obvious eg. packing cars in front of your house.
- Remember to cancel milk and papers. If they sit on your doorstep they tell everyone passing that you are away.
- If possible, get someone you trust to keep an eye on your house while you are away. They might even be prepared to visit your home to move mail away from your door, open and shut curtains etc.



What to do if you think there is an intruder in your home

Confronting an intruder is always dangerous. Remember that your personal safety is much more important than your possessions.

- If you are in your home and think there is an intruder, call the police – don't go and investigate by yourself.
- If you come home and suspect an intruder has been inside, don't enter the property. Use a mobile or a neighbour's phone to call the police.
- Be a good neighbour. If you see anything suspicious, contact the police.



Callers at the Door

Try to identify all callers before you let them in. Some people worry that they will seem anti-social but it is better to be safe than sorry and genuine callers will not mind waiting.

- Intercom systems, spy holes, door chains and outside lighting can all help to safely identify callers. If you have them, make sure you use them.
- If a caller claims to be representing a company or organisation, ask for ID.
- If you are uncertain about the ID, phone the organisation to check the caller is genuine. Use the telephone number given in the phone book or on your utility bill, rather than the one on the identity card.
- Dishonest salesmen or workmen often offer to buy or sell products or services at what seem like bargain prices. You will be safer getting quotes from reputable companies.
- Sometimes a bogus caller will try and distract you whilst an accomplice robs you, often by entering through a back door. Try and make sure other entrances into your home are locked when you answer the door.



Answering the Telephone

- Try not to answer the phone with your name or telephone number.
- If the caller is not known to you, then avoid answering questions about yourself, no matter how innocent they sound.
- If you have an answer machine, consider carefully before including your name or number in the message.
- The message should never tell people that you are out or away. Try and give the impression that you are only temporarily unable to answer.
- If you are listed in the phone directory, you might want to give your initials and surname rather than your full name.

Dealing with Malicious or Nuisance Calls

- Try to keep calm and hang up without responding.
- If the phone rings again, don't say anything when you answer. Normal callers will identify themselves and if it is the malicious caller you can hang up again.
- Make a note of the time and nature of calls and, if the problem persists or you are worried, inform the police and your telephone provider. BT operates a 24 hour, free advice line: Freefone **0800 666 700**.



Safety on the Internet

The Internet can be a valuable source of information, education and entertainment for all the family. However, you do need to take precautions.

- Try to use sites run by organisations you trust. Using a reputable and 'secure' site is especially important when purchasing goods or services or using a chat room.
- If you use chat rooms why not choose a nickname to use rather than your real name? Avoid giving out personal details, such as name, address, phone number etc.
- If you decide to meet someone you have met on the internet you need to be careful. Why not meet in a public place and invite a few other friends as well?
- Explain to your children that adults sometimes pretend to be children in chat rooms and that they should tell you if anyone asks for personal details or suggests meeting in person.
- Let your children know that if they come across anything on the internet or on e-mail which they find upsetting they should tell you.
- Overseeing children on the internet is much easier if the computer is in a central area of your home.



Children Home Alone

There is no law that states the minimum age at which a child can be left alone. However, it is an offence to leave a child alone when doing so puts them at risk. Think carefully about whether your child is mature and responsible enough to be left and for how long.

- The NSPCC recommend that babies and young child should never be left alone at home even if they are asleep. Most children under thirteen should not be left for more than a short period and no child under sixteen should be left overnight.
- Children should always know where you are and when you will be back.
- Children should have a list of contact numbers for you and for other people they can phone if they need to. Make sure they know how to phone the emergency services.
- Children should not answer the door when at home alone. If they answer the telephone, children should not tell callers they are by themselves.
- Children should always be happy and confident about being left alone.



Running a Business from Home

More and more people are choosing to run their own business from home. There are many advantages to this but you do need to take some precautions.

- Consider carefully before advertising your home address or telephone number. Is it possible to use a P.O. Box address or a mobile phone number instead?
- If clients need to come to your home, ask for a contact number and then check it is genuine by using it to confirm the details of the appointment.
- Keep a record of all meetings and appointments and consider giving or e-mailing a copy to someone else.
- You could also arrange to contact someone at pre-arranged times or ask them to call you. A code word might be useful to let them know if you feel threatened or uneasy, without alerting a client.
- Think about where the meetings or appointments in your home will take place. Try to use a room that looks as business like as possible. Keep doors into other rooms closed.
- Make sure any promotional literature you produce is as professional sounding and detailed as possible, to ensure interest from genuine customers only.



BT Home Monitoring

BT Home Monitoring is a wireless home security system that offers protection in and around your home, 24 hours a day. With a control panel, two movement detectors, a magnetic contact (for a door or window), a keyfob and an external dummy siren, your home can be secured simply and easily. Up to 28 wireless accessories can be supported, including smoke detectors*, so you can tailor the system to suit the requirements of your home

Safety inside the home

- The control panel and keyfob have emergency buttons to call for help. When activated these set off the internal siren and alert your contacts simultaneously by phone, text message and email. You can also partially switch on your system when you're at home e.g for protection downstairs at night

Safety outside the home

- The keyfob can be used to switch your system on and off from outside, and has an integrated emergency button

Whilst away from home

- If there's a problem the internal siren will sound and you will be contacted by phone, text message and email. If you're unavailable or away on holiday or business, you can nominate up to three contacts who will be notified in your absence



Protecting the family

- The system can be set to sound an audible alert when a door e.g. the front door, has been opened. This is ideal for protecting little ones. And by using the optional alarm on and off function, you can use the internet to see when older children have come home and switched off the alarm

At just £199.99, which includes the first three months of monitoring (usually £5 per month), affordable home protection is available to everybody. For more information, please call free on **0800 328 6731** or visit **www.bt.com/homemonitoring**

BT Home Monitoring requires internet access (via Netscape V6 or IE V5.5 or above), an operational email address, 240V power supply and an active telephone line (not compatible with ISDN2e). Telephone and online charges apply. For full terms and conditions visit **www.bt.com/homemonitoring**.

Prices correct at time of going to press (May 2004)

*Wireless smoke detectors can be added to the system for £69.99



The Suzy Lamplugh Trust is the UK's leading authority on personal safety. The Trust works to reduce violence and aggression in society and helps everyone – men, women and children – to gain the knowledge and confidence they need to live safer lives.

We do this by providing positive, practical approaches to reducing individual exposure to aggression and violence in society.

To find out more about the Trust and the range of personal safety resources and services we offer visit www.suzylamplugh.org or call **020 8876 0305**.

