

This is the third installment of a 12 part series on Crime Prevention for the Drayton Valley area, starting in April 2016 and wrapping up in March 2017. The Drayton Valley RCMP is committed to assisting this community, and the intent of this series is to educate and inform the public on property crime, and what to do when you become a victim of it. While these tips may not solve all of your crime issues in the area, these tips will go a long way in assisting the investigators of your local Detachment in hopefully either recovering property and/or detecting the culprits involved in these crimes.

Part #3: **Break Ins and Preserving Evidence**

Imagine this scene: You arrive home and see your front door slightly ajar. Moving towards your home you see inside that the contents of your home have gone through. You have become the victim of a break in. According to Canadian statistics, over 80% of all residential break ins occur during daylight hours, and most times the entry happens on a ground floor entrance/ window or basement window.

Looking at this from a Law Enforcement perspective, the preservation of evidence concerning these types of crimes is of the utmost importance when dealing with break ins. Commonly, once a break in is discovered, not only does the homeowner go in to look, but sometimes family or the neighbor attends the house to look as well, all moving inside and looking around, and touching or moving items. What most well meaning, and supportive people to the victim of the crime do not realize, is that the more people that enter into that scene, the less likely the investigators coming to the scene will be able to obtain evidence, as it will be obliterated by the amount of people moving around inside. The best case scenario is to disturb as little as possible and not touch anything that may have been moved by the culprits.

If you are inside the home and realize that a break in has occurred, follow the same path out from where you came in, making note of anything you may have touched, and call the Police, and prevent anyone from re-entering the scene. The investigators will have to know where you went and then can determine if there is anything that has been moved or touched by the culprits involved. The entry points and items moved hold the most evidentiary value, along with where the culprits walked in the home.

If a window has been smashed out, please do not touch the shards or any of the mess on the floor. There is good potential for prints or DNA. A simple sweep of glass may remove our best evidence. When the Police come to do a scene survey it is helpful for a homeowner to be able to provide information directly to the investigator on what they believe has been moved. There are some scenes that will have enough evidence for our Forensic Identification Section (FIS) to be called in to assist. This is a determination made by the investigator based on a number of factors however the more pristine the scene is, the better likelihood of obtaining evidence. Believe it or not, there have been cases where the culprit has dropped their wallet on scene and makes it fairly easy to track down who was involved. You must resist the urge to tidy up right away after discovering the break in, until Police have viewed the scene and can determine if there is evidence which may have evidentiary value. These tips are also useful when discovering the same type of situation with sheds, outbuildings or garages.

As the homeowner, you may have to provide what are known as elimination fingerprints. These are taken when fingerprint evidence is discovered and it is of use to the investigation to make sure the evidence located does not belong to the owner of the property. These would be taken at the Detachment and are used by our FIS to make that determination.

Some good tips to prevent a break in to your residence are:

1. Ensure when leaving your house all of your doors and windows are secured shut and locked.
2. Don't leave a key outside under the doormat, a plant or anyplace where it will be easy to locate. Criminals are well versed in all the usual spots so don't give them the opportunity.
3. If leaving for a trip, have someone mow the lawn and check on the house daily. Activity around the residence is key to preventing criminals from targeting these homes.
4. Invest in good solid doors and door surrounds, and high security hardware.
5. Get to know your neighbours. The most likely source of witness assistance to Police lives in the neighbourhood or right beside you.

Next Month, in July 2016, we will discuss break ins to businesses and ways to prevent them.

Yours in Service,

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