

Help Starts Here.

Help is available if you are a victim of Break and Enter (B&E)

When a person goes into someone's home without permission and intends to commit a crime, or commits a crime, a residential B&E has occurred. B&Es are usually committed for the purpose of stealing something of value.

Breaking and entering is a serious crime, whatever the value of the property stolen or destroyed. The consequences of this crime are not only financial but also emotional.

Residential B&Es occur in all neighbourhoods and cross all age, gender, economic, and cultural groups. Perpetrators of B&Es rarely know their victims or target their victims personally.

While there is a wide range of reactions to residential break and enter, this crime often has emotional consequences for victims and their families. A break-in can shatter a victim's perception that his or her home is a safe haven. There can be a profound sense of loss when items of sentimental value are taken or damaged and a loss of privacy, knowing that someone has gone through one's personal belongings.

Victims of break and enter may benefit from practical support as well as emotional support. Regaining a feeling of control over one's life is important to the healing process. If you are a victim of residential break and enter, **help is available**.

What about reporting a B&E to the police?

There are a few key reasons why reporting to the police is important, besides wanting the perpetrator to be caught and prosecuted. You may want advice from police regarding home security measures and if you intend to file an insurance claim, a police report will be required.

While B&Es are generally difficult crimes to solve, some victims find that reporting the crime is an important step in putting the crime behind them. You can get help from victim services and other agencies whether or not the police are involved.

What help is available to me?

Police

Police respond to and investigate reports of break and enter. They also provide information about other agencies that may be able to help you.

Depending on the circumstances, police will respond on an emergency or a non-emergency basis. While many cases of B&E do not require an immediate response, some do; such as crimes in progress and immediate threats to a person or property.

In addition to providing information on home security measures, some police departments will conduct a security check of your home. Contact your local community policing office or crime prevention unit for more information.



Victim Services

Victim services are located in community agencies or police stations and provide emotional support, justice system information, safety planning, referrals to counselling and other services, and support during court attendance. Some also conduct home security checks or refer victims to police departments for home security checks.

You can get more information or be connected to a victim service program in your area by calling **VictimLINK** (a toll-free, 24-hour, multilingual 1-800-563-0808 helpline).

VictimLINK can also connect you to a network of community and government resources, including social, health, justice and counselling resources.

Other Services

The British Columbia Crime Prevention Association (1-888-405-2288) provides information on crime prevention issues and programs. Block Watch Society of British Columbia (1-877-602-3358) provides information on setting up and maintaining community “block watch” programs for preventing crime and increasing safety in neighbourhoods.

Victims of crime are protected under B.C.'s *Victims of Crime Act*. The Act protects the victims' right to be treated with dignity and respect and to obtain information about the criminal justice system and their case.

What steps do I take if I need help?

- If your home has just been broken into and the perpetrator is still there or nearby, call 911 from a safe place.
- If you want to report the B&E to the police and the situation is not urgent (e.g., the perpetrator is not around, you are not in danger), call the non-emergency number for police in your community.
- If you have insurance that may cover stolen or damaged items, contact your insurance company immediately.
- Make a list of what was stolen or damaged, including any identification numbers or photos if you have them.
- When police will be attending, try not to touch or disturb anything in your home, and do not discard anything. Ask for the police file number so you can provide this to your insurance company.
- Tell someone you trust what happened. Let your neighbours know what happened. If a neighbour, friend, or family member can provide emotional support or help you in practical ways, ask for help.
- If you wish to contact victim services, call VictimLINK at 1-800-563-0808. Victim services can help you directly and can also refer you to other community agencies. Don't hesitate to ask a victim service worker if you have questions about break and enter, or your rights.



Tips to improve the security of your home and belongings

If you feel that your home is not as secure as it could be, there may be a number of things you can do. Taking action to improve your home security may help you deal with the emotional effects of B&E and regain a sense of control.

If you rent your home, you may need to get permission to make certain changes. Your landlord may also be able to help you make the property more secure. If you own a condo or townhouse, you may want to check with your strata council before making changes.

Doors and windows

- replace or reinforce exterior doors (if they are not at least 1 ¾" thick and made of solid or laminated wood, or metal)
- install deadbolt locks or interlocking bolt locks on exterior doors
- treat a garage door "clicker" as if it were a house key—don't leave it in your vehicle
- secure sash windows with keyed lock latches
- put lengths of wood or metal bar along the bottom track of sliding windows
- install bars or other security devices on lower-level windows
- make sure you can quickly open your windows and doors from the inside (e.g., keys to locks are accessible, bars can be opened or removed) in the event of fire
- install an alarm system and make sure it functions properly

Valuables

- store small valuables in a safe deposit box or in different places in your home
- engrave larger items with an identification number so they are less attractive to thieves
- record serial numbers of appliances and electronics so they are easier to identify if stolen
- take photos or video of your valuables in case you have to make an insurance claim

Outside your home

- ensure entrances are clearly visible (e.g., clear of shrubbery, well lit)
- install extra outdoor lights, including motion-sensing lights
- keep ladders and tools out of sight, as these items are sometimes used to break into homes
- don't leave a spare key outside your home—consider leaving the spare key with a neighbour, friend, or relative instead

Absences from your home

- install timers for the lights, and for a radio or TV, so it appears someone is home when you're not
- when going away for an extended period:
 - tell a neighbour you trust when you'll be away
 - suspend mail, newspapers, and any other regular deliveries
 - disable your garage door opener



Beyond your home

- get to know your neighbours
- watch for suspicious activities in your neighbourhood
- get involved in a local “block watch” program (call Block Watch Society of British Columbia at 1-877-602-3358)

Resources

Block Watch Society of British Columbia

- Phone: (604) 291-9959, extension 221, or toll free 1-877-602-3358
- E-mail: blockwatch@bccpa.org
- Website: www.blockwatch.com

British Columbia Crime Prevention Association

- Phone: (604) 291-9959 or toll free 1-888-405-2288
- E-mail: info@bccpa.org
- Website: www.bccpa.org

VictimLINK (Victim Services Information and Referrals)

- Phone: toll free 1-800-563-0808, 24 hours every day
- TTY (Teletypewriter): through Information Services Vancouver TTY service at (604) 875-0885 (collect calls accepted)
- Multilingual

Please note: *This document provides general information only. It is not intended to provide legal information or advice.*

