



Fire,
Security,
Electronic
Surveillance

"QUALITY AND PEACE OF MIND SINCE 1969"

(410) 766-8336

THE ADVISOR

*A Quarterly Security Guide Especially
Prepared for the Clients and Friends of A.A.S.C.O.*

Post Office Box 159 • Pasadena, MD 21123-0159 • www.okaasco.com

FEELING SECURE IN YOUR HOME

Let's face it, the "Good Old Days" are gone forever—the times when we knew all of our neighbors, left the doors unlocked without a second thought, and "at risk" was a term applied to high-wire walkers and astronauts. Today, sadly, everyone, and every home, is statistically at risk when you consider that a burglary takes place about every 8 to 10 seconds.

All of us are barraged with daily

reminders of our vulnerability to crime. And, at one time or another, we all mentally review our concerns and options: Should we have an alarm system installed? A monitored alarm system? Buy a big dog? A gun? Bar the doors and windows and never leave our home again? Then again, not all of our risks come from the outside. There are always the home safety concerns: Are our homes safe? Could

we survive a fire? Are our children safe? The list is uncomfortably long. And, unfortunately, many of us would rather not struggle with the answers.

Today's electronic security systems offer many benefits beyond the basic purpose of protection from intruders. A well-designed system can help simplify your daily life and keep your home and family safe and secure. ❖

The Perfect Gift

Need a meaningful anniversary gift for your parents or your spouse's parents? Are you losing sleep over the fact that your firstborn is about to leave the safety and security of your nest and go out into the world on his or her own?

If any of these circumstances ring a bell with you, take heart, your concerns are not without reason. It's estimated that crimes against people and property happen approximately every 14 seconds—that translates to nearly 6,200 burglaries and/or robberies every day.

Criminals often prey on those least able to defend themselves—such as the elderly (because they are often frail) and the young (because they are often naive, or too-trusting). Unfortunately, these two groups can become the preferred targets of criminals—making a home security system an ideal gift idea for either your parents or your children living away from home.

A professionally installed

home security system is much more than just a practical gift. As you already know, it's a tangible shield against criminals and accidents that provides security, personal safety and peace-of-mind.

For loved ones with special medical or other health concerns, a home system can be custom configured with Panic Button devices to signal medical emergencies. There are also systems designed to specifically meet the needs of the elderly. These can incorporate control panels with large, easy-to-read and easy-to-push buttons and very easy-to-understand control commands.

We can offer you a selection of security system packages in all price ranges to suit the special needs of your loved ones living in our service area. And, if they live outside our service area, we'll be happy to recommend a reliable, professional installer wherever they live. ❖





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FIREPLACE SAFETY

Fireplaces evoke images of cozy warmth, a pretty flame—and, perhaps, even a little romance. But, fireplaces and chimneys can be dangerous if they're poorly maintained.

Many people believe they only need to have their chimneys cleaned and inspected if they burn wood in their fireplace. But the truth is that all of your home's heating systems — whether using wood, coal, pellets, propane or natural gas—rely on the chimney to safely carry toxic gases out of the house. Chimney and fireplace maintenance—especially in older homes—should be done every year to check for residue build-up, structural deterioration, moisture damage, as well as the possibility of animal nests.

The cost to have a certified chimney sweep clean and inspect a chimney/fireplace is often less than \$100. Regular inspection, cleaning and maintenance can eliminate fire and poisonous gas hazards, and help ensure that your fireplace is a safe and secure source of comfort and pleasure. ❖

Why It's Important To Do A Home Inventory

If your home is struck by a burglar or a fire, an up-to-date home inventory will make it easier to deal with police and your insurance company. Without an up-to-date inventory, you'll have to create a list of all your property from memory.

Creating and updating a home inventory isn't nearly the time-consuming task it used to be. Creating an inventory and keeping it current prepares you for possible losses—and, it can also help you prevent losses from happening. As you inventory your possessions, you'll become more aware of their vulnerability. Then you can take steps to make them more secure.

The easiest way to inventory your home is with a video camera. As you photograph your possessions, describe them fully, including their value and whether or not they are marked with ID or serial numbers. Go room by room, including the garage, attic and basement. Be sure to include jewelry, clothing, stamp and coin collections, CD and record collections, silver, tools, electronic equipment and anything else of significant value.

Another way to do an inventory is with a pad of paper and a still camera. Again, take photographs of everything and write down the details.

Once you've documented everything on film or videotape, it's a good idea to formalize your inventory. Many insurance companies offer home inventory forms. Also, there are computer software packages specifically designed for home inventory applications. Whatever method you choose, you should record key information about each item, including: complete descriptions—make, model and serial numbers—and estimated values.

Keep your written and photographic inventory in a safe place, such as a good quality fire-resistant file or in a bank safe deposit box. Keep at least one copy away from your home. If you plan to travel, it's a good idea to give a copy of your home inventory to a trusted neighbor or relative. That way, if there is a loss while you're away, they can report what's missing or damaged to the police or your insurance company.

When you consider the alternative, taking the time to create a home inventory before it's needed makes very good sense. ❖



Home Safety Is Everyone's Concern



One way to live a long, healthy life and to help your loved ones do the same is to prevent accidents and injuries in the home. Some of the most common and dangerous accidents that can happen involve the “Big 4” of home safety. Here are ways to protect yourself and your family:

- 1. Fire**—Don't overload circuits. Don't smoke in bed. Keep matches and lighters away from children. Keep a fire extinguisher near the kitchen. Make sure you have properly working smoke detectors on every level of your home. Have an emergency escape plan and practice it periodically to make certain each family member knows how to get out in case of a fire.
- 2. Firearms**—If you choose to keep guns in your home, keep them locked-away at all times. Store guns and ammunition in separate places. Never allow children access to your guns. Never underestimate a child's ability to find a hidden gun.
- 3. Accidental Poisonings**—Keep poisonous materials away from food storage areas and children. Store dangerous cleaning agents and solvents on high shelves or in safety-lock cabinets. Keep medications in bottles with safety caps and in locked cabinets. Know how to reach your local poison control center and call them immediately if you suspect someone has ingested a dangerous substance. They can give you instructions for treatment over the phone.
- 4. Falls**—Keep doorways and stairs free of clutter. Make sure rugs are taped down or have non-skid pads underneath. In homes with elderly residents, remove small rugs. Keep night-lights on in halls and bathrooms.

Home safety doesn't require a monumental investment of time, energy or money. If each family member takes a moment to make certain they're looking out for the safety of everyone in their household, then most of these dangers can be eliminated. ❖

Recently, a group of researchers predicted that in the near future, homeowners will be as concerned about medical and environmental monitoring, detection and intervention as they are about security and fire today.

Many homeowners *worry* about their homes when they're not there. We can easily help you put those concerns to rest by integrating a remote home security link into your existing system. Then, you can access your system, including surveillance cameras that are capable of transmitting images over the Internet, to a number of devices.

Another example of today's homeowners reacting to environmental concerns is the possibility of electric power outages. Most people take reliable electricity for granted. Now, as the need for more high-quality power is being driven by an ever increasing demand from electronics, computers and appliances, many homeowners are considering the practicality of home power generators. Highly efficient microturbines and engines that run on natural gas, as well as fuel cells, are popular solutions that will become more commonplace in the next few years.

What other areas will come to prominence in the healthy homes of the future? According to researchers, indoor air quality bio-sensors, medical monitoring systems and whole-house water safety systems are just a few. In addition, there will eventually be systems to detect bacteria in food and water and even systems that will fight dust mites and mold. ❖



Dear Friends and Clients,

Welcome to our winter newsletter. As you resume your routine, after the busy holiday season, please take the time to secure your home and businesses against criminals. Be sure to lock your doors and windows as well as arming your security system each time you leave your home, and at the end of your business day.

TECH TIP: If your phone service is provided by a cable or internet provider such as BROADSTRIPE, COMCAST, or VONAGE please test your system into the central station. There may be a compatibility issue.

Please call Ronnie (410) 766-8336 ex-21 if you have any procedural questions.

We wish you a very Happy New Year, and a prosperous 2016.

Sincerely

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Does a Burglar See Your Home as an Opportunity?

Career criminals are rational, decision-making businesspeople. Most burglars know exactly where the cash and valuables are kept.

According to studies of residential burglaries conducted by Temple University in Philadelphia, PA, most burglars plan their intrusions based on a calculated decision-making process.

There are predictable signals that attract burglars to specific homes. A *prime target* is often a recent home buyer (information easily gotten from internet), who lives in close proximity to a major thoroughfare, on a corner lot, in a middle-income neighborhood, in an older home with an attached garage.

One of the primary factors burglars plan in detail is how quickly they can gain entry and then escape. Homes on corner lots allow burglars to park on side streets where neighbors are less likely to notice. Homes near a busy thoroughfare are chosen so the criminal

can easily put distance between himself and the crime scene.

Another primary factor burglars consider in their *criminal plan* is the potential payoff. As much as we'd all like to believe we are uniquely individual, an experienced burglar can estimate how much he or she will be able to carry away from a given property.

More than 50 percent of burglarized homes are within three blocks of a major thoroughfare. And, 50 percent of burglaries are committed against homeowners who have lived in their homes less than five years. And, of that 50 percent, 32 percent had lived in their homes less than one year.

If the details of this statistical profile seem to fit your life, then you need to be especially vigilant about arming your system whenever you are away from home—and, making certain there aren't any unprotected access points that a burglar could capitalize on. ❖

