

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

OUR NEWS

Neighbourhood and Home Watch Network (England & Wales)
October 2011



This edition is sponsored by National Security Inspectorate and Towergate Insurance

Message from the Chair Jim Maddan

It is a year since I took over as Chair of the Neighbourhood and Home Watch Network and a lot has happened in that time. Not only have we reinforced our position as the leading crime prevention voluntary organisation in England and Wales, but we have launched our new interactive website and secured substantial levels of sponsorship from Towergate and NSI.

We have been inundated with requests from other voluntary organisations and commercial enterprises who wish to work with us. It is a glowing endorsement of the Neighbourhood Watch brand, particularly considering the high calibre of organisation concerned, and a great incentive to continue to drive the movement forward.

The darker evenings are a reminder to us all of the need to be extra careful when leaving our homes, to ensure that we do not increase the chance of becoming a victim of crime. Make sure that valuables are not on display and that a light is left on when appropriate. Please take care of yourself and your neighbours.



Protect your home this winter

Autumn is finally upon us and there is no doubt that winter will soon be on its way. Now is the best time to prepare your home for the cold weather.

Last December's freezing conditions resulted in 100,000 claims * for burst pipes and insurers dealt with £900m * worth of property claims during December alone.



In order to protect your home during cold and freezing conditions, we recommend:

- Insulating loft pipes - lag with felt or pipe-wrap and cover with a waterproof material (insulation is reduced if lagging gets wet). Insulate the top, rather than bottom of the pipe. If lagged below it will prevent heat rising. Pay particular attention to lagging pipes in lofts with improved insulation as they will not benefit from rising heat.
- Insulating the water tank - protect with either a pre-formed insulation kit or polythene bags filled with glass wool or some other loose insulation filling (available from most DIY stores). Don't lag below the tank as it stops heat

radiating from the rooms below. Ensure the tank has a rigid lid which is strong enough to carry insulation – do not replace lid with insulation material as it could break up and fall into your water. Similarly, remove any carpet or furnishings that may be covering the tank, they're useless insulators and could drop into the water and cause contamination.

- Leaving the loft hatch open – this'll allow warm air to circulate.

If you are away from your property during cold weather then we suggest the following additional precautions:

- Leave the central heating running at a constant temperature – usually around 15 degrees centigrade (58 Fahrenheit).
- Ask a neighbour to check on your property and leave a contact number in case of emergencies.

Going away for a winter break? Make sure your home is safe and secure.

Doors and Windows

Take some time to check out the locks you have in your home.

We recommend that the lock on the main door has a British Standard 3621 mark. Otherwise, make sure it is a mortice deadlock of at least five levers or any rim automatic dead latch with a key locking handle on the inside.

For any other external doors, they should either be to the above standard, or have a lock and key operated security bolts fitted at the top and bottom. For sliding patio doors, key operated patio doors mounted internally on the centre rails are also adequate.

Opening windows on the ground floor, basement and accessible upper floor windows should be fitted with key operated security devices or shutters securely locked internally.

Discourage burglars

Most burglars look for easy targets – so if they see an opportunity they are more tempted to break in.

To reduce your chances of theft:

- Check around your house for security weak spots such as concealed entrances, poor lighting or doors and windows that can be opened from the outside.
- Lock away garden tools and ladders that could help a thief break in, and lock sheds and garages too, especially if they adjoin your home.
- Photograph any valuable items, and if possible security mark them with your postcode and house number.
- Never leave keys in a lock, or a 'secret' hiding place like under the mat – burglars know them all!
- Trim garden hedges so that doors and windows can be seen and no-one can hide.
- Always lock your shed or garage – especially if it has a connecting door to your house.

* Association of British Insurers, burst pipe and property claims – December 10.

Telephone Companies & Home Security

Consumers in the UK are being given increasing choice when it comes to choosing their telephone company. However, if your home has an intruder alarm system monitored by an Alarm Receiving Centre (ARC), changing your telephone company could lead to higher bills or, worse still, failure of communications with the ARC.

Chris Pinder, National Security Inspectorate Sales & Marketing Manager, explains how to keep your home secure and still benefit from cheaper calls.



Telephone services can now be supplied by, amongst others, your Broadband provider, digital television supplier or even your supermarket chain. This provides greater choice and potentially lower telephone costs. However, the operation of your intruder alarm system can be adversely affected if you are not very careful.

When you change your telephone company, your calls search out the new supplier's network or, if you have 'least cost routing', may seek out a range of networks. This means your calls could flip between several supplier networks or take a longer journey in order to identify the cheapest route. To further complicate matters, BT has a mandate to increase Broadband services which requires them to upgrade their network.

This includes upgrading exchanges and replacing traditional copper wires with fibre optics. In layman's terms this means that some parts of the network operate on a super fast fibre optic highway, whilst other parts remain on a slower copper transmission. It is the calls flipping between supplier networks and/or the different types of network that can lead to a delay in the call (albeit a fraction of a second). It is this slight delay that can lead to additional telephone call charges.

An Alarm Receiving Centre (ARC) is used to monitor your alarm when you are seeking a system designed to elicit a police response. A device called a digital communicator is commonly used in domestic premises to enable your alarm system to communicate with the ARC. This type of device makes a telephone call to the ARC whenever it wants to communicate and therefore every call is charged to your telephone bill. The ARC monitors the messages received so it knows when your alarm system is 'set', when it is 'unset', or when it is triggered by an intruder; if an intrusion occurs it is the ARC who will contact the police. The fraction of a second delay, explained above, can be sufficient in some cases to trigger a 'mistiming' of the signals between your intruder alarm and the ARC.

Here's the (simplified) science! A digital communicator from your intruder alarm system makes a call to a receiver at the ARC when reporting an alarm 'event' such as when you 'set' or 'unset' your alarm. When the 'receiver' at the ARC accepts a call, it returns an acknowledgement (or handshake). Just like a fax, this enables the two pieces of technology to establish that they are talking the same language. Once both parties are talking, the digital communicator sends out updates e.g. 'the alarm has been set'. Once sent, the communicator then waits for the receiver to reply to acknowledge that the information has been received.

This is where the 'delay' becomes key. If the communicator hasn't received a reply from the receiver within a certain time, (a fraction of a second), it will resend the original message. It will continue to resend the original message for as many times as has been programmed into the equipment (generally around ten times). The 'delay', described above, can be the cause of a 'mistiming' between the communicator and the receiver which makes the communicator believe it has not received a response to its original message; hence it will make, and continue to make, further calls.

So what can be done? Firstly, if you have a monitored alarm and you're thinking of changing telecoms provider, first and foremost, check with your intruder alarm company as to the likely impact on your alarm equipment. It may be necessary to upgrade your digital communicator for a newer model that can handle the timing delays. Similarly, speak to the telephone company that you are thinking of switching your calls to. However, they are not experts on alarm signalling and may not know what impact it will have. If you do switch telephone company, keep one eye on your phone bill and check for unexpected or increased

frequency of calls.

There are other solutions for communicating with the ARC that do not involve making individual telephone calls. These generally involve an annual fee for the communications which takes into account the likely usage. Speak with your alarm company to explore the options.

NSI wishes to thank Roger Kay, ARC Manager at Northern Monitoring Ltd for his input to this article.

Window Stickers – Update



Earlier this month, the Neighbourhood and Home Watch Network and Towergate Insurance unveiled the new household window stickers.

Since the unveiling, we are pleased to say that a large number of people have been able to successfully place and receive orders for both Neighbourhood Watch and Home Watch stickers.

Please note that you do need to peel the front of the sticker off to see the logo and to attach it to your window. The Towergate Insurance details should be on the inside of your window.

Orders for stickers should be placed with your closest Towergate Office, which can be found as appendix A.

The Launch of 'Your Square Mile'

Your Square Mile, the first Citizens' Mutual, is now open for business.

The Your Square Mile mutual was launched on October 4th and is the first of its kind; a mutual created by citizens for citizens, open to everyone aged 16 or over in the UK.

A mutual is an organisation owned by its members and run entirely for their benefit rather than for the benefit of outside shareholders. A mutual is about working together: lobbying for change; sharing ideas, skills and resources; negotiating discounts for the things we need in order to improve our lives and strengthen our communities.

To find out more please follow this link: <http://yoursquaremile.co.uk/>



**YOUR
SQUARE
MILE**

Community Action against Crime Fund



Please note that the 'Community Action against Crime' fund is still open to submit bids until the 1st of December 2011. The £10 million funding stream has been made available by the Home Office who have in turn appointed the Community Development Foundation to deliver the funding programme.

Small grants between £1,000 and £15,000 and large grants between £15,001 and

£50,000 are available for innovative projects or services to tackle local community safety issues.

To find out more information please follow this link: http://www.ourwatch.org.uk/news_and_events/news/home_office_funding/

(Image courtesy of http://newsimg.bbc.co.uk/media/images/44887000/jpg/_44887542_homeoffice_226.jpg)

NHWN Volunteering Opportunities

Do you have a wealth of knowledge and the skills which you would like to utilise and the ability to coordinate projects at a strategic level?

To find out more please follow this link: http://www.ourwatch.org.uk/get_involved/volunteer_opportunities/

(Image courtesy of http://www.newham.gov.ukNRRdonlyres-FoBBF672-0144-48CE-9EAC-30BFFA9337F00VolunteeringHands_A.jpg)

