

How Protected Are Your Tenants? by Joey Cruz

You've just purchased a new rental property. Do you know what kind of locks are on the doors? Or what condition they are in? What about the glass slider? The emergency exits? How secure are the windows? Is there an alarm system installed? Bottom line, how protected are you with regards to your tenants and your property liability?

Now, this line of questioning isn't meant to scare you. These are the questions anyone should ask, whether leasing a home to new occupants or moving into a new home yourself. Taking the security of the location into consideration can only benefit everyone involved. Your property values and rental income go up, and your renters feel safer in their homes. Everybody wins.

So, how do you get started? The answers you seek can be learned simply by calling up a locksmith and asking for a security evaluation. Some locksmiths will offer this service for free; others may choose to charge you for their time. It's to be expected, but remember, everything is negotiable. A locksmith wants your business as much as you want your property secured. Because of this, you will be surprised by just how many fees he will be willing to waive to secure you as a client for life.

Here are some basic guidelines for the decisions you'll need to make during such an evaluation:

- Door locks. Knob and a Deadbolt. Simple, right? Not exactly. There is a large variety of lock types, all of which serve a different purpose, all of which go for different prices. If you want to educate yourself a bit, ask other home or apartment owners what they have installed, check the internet, and of course, ask your locksmith. He went to school for this stuff. He wants to tell you.
- Window locks. Windows on the ground and even second and third floors can be susceptible to break-in attempts. Make sure that the windows all have working lock mechanisms, whether by bolt, hook, or latch. You may also want to look into further securing the windows, since many such locks tend to be old or worn out. Use your judgment, and again, trust your locksmith.
- Electronic systems. It's a scary term, I know, but not all systems are alike. Ask your locksmith what options you have as far as surveillance and motion sensors, are concerned. Some people want higher security than others. Some people have good reason.
- Adjustments and replacements. Sometimes, all a door needs to become fully secure is to be shifted half-a-centimeter to the left. If there are any fixtures on the doors or windows that seem loose or misaligned, bring it to your locksmith's attention (if he hasn't already noticed it for himself). Some may need replacing, others will only need to be taken off and reinstalled properly.
- Fire safety and emergency exits. Home security is more than just keeping intruders out. Attention should also be paid to the ease with which those on the inside can get out in case of an emergency.

With these things to think on, the process of bringing a little (or a lot) more security to your properties should prove easy, painless and educational.

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