

## Keep Your House—and Wallet—Secure

BY JAMES DULLEY

**Dear Jim:** I would feel more comfortable with better home security, but I don't want higher electric bills from using floodlights. Also, I cannot afford a complete monitored system. Are there any other good options?—Charles L.

**Dear Charles:** Adequate home security has become a high priority for many families. While a well-lighted yard provides a good deterrent against break-ins, outdoor lighting can be expensive to install and operate.

At an average rate of 11 cents per kilowatt-hour, using two 150-watt floodlights for 10 hours per night costs about \$120 annually. If you choose outdoor lighting, put in light fixtures only where you feel security could be a problem. In most cases, motion-sensor lighting makes the most economical sense, and solar-powered units can help cut down electric bills even further.

However, don't immediately write off a fully monitored home security system as being too expensive. After doing some research, I recently switched from a major alarm system monitoring company after 21 years. I discovered one of my local utilities provided monitoring for my existing security system at half the cost. Since

### QUICK TIP

Home security may bring peace of mind, but how can consumers make a home safe without losing control of energy costs?



This wall-control module for a monitored security system boasts colored buttons for police, fire, and health emergencies.

utilities, including electric cooperatives, have staff available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, they often can provide security system monitoring at a better price.

Most security companies install equipment for a low initial cost (or even for free). Along with providing standard security, many monitored systems also include smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. When smoke is detected, they alert your local fire department immediately—a significant advantage if you're not home since a small fire can be extinguished before major damage occurs.

If you cannot afford monitoring, an X10 dialer can be attached to most home security systems. When someone tries to break in and the alarm goes off, it automatically calls the telephone number of a friend or neighbor who can alert the police for you. This dialer option may have to be professionally installed.

Sometimes simple improvements are quite effective. Good deadbolt locks on doors and keeping window locks tightly closed are two of the best ways to keep would-be intruders out—and much less expensive than operating floodlights.

With deadbolt locks, you generally get what you pay for. For starters, select a bump-resistant deadbolt. Otherwise, with a bumping key, a thief can open most pin tumbler locks in a few seconds.

Master Lock offers “Night Watch” technology that lets a deadbolt be set so even a key can’t open it from outside. For my part, I have installed an electronic Schlage LiNK deadbolt on my front door that can be opened with a changeable four-button combination, a key, or controlled remotely from a laptop computer with an optional communication package.

Other security options include outdoor wireless video cameras. Prices on these s are very reasonable.

In addition, affordable sensors can be mounted on windows and doors. Although they aren’t monitored, a burglar might not know this when their loud alarm goes off. And if you don’t have one of the most time-proven protection systems—a dog—barking dog devices sensitive to vibration can be hung on the inside of doorknobs.

When developing a home security plan, remember burglars want to get inside quickly. So create several layers of obstacles outside windows—planting thorny rose or barberry bushes are one suggestion. Also consider extra locks

on windows and placing large furniture in front of easy-to-access locations.

Finally, strengthen framing around the latch area on outside doors (particularly back doors). Many door frames boast only a one-inch thick pine board supporting the latch—with a couple of good kicks, the wood splinters and the door swings open. Attach a reinforcing steel strip under the door trim and install longer screws that reach deep into the wall framing. **KCL**

Have a question for Jim? Send inquiries to: James Dulley, Kansas Country Living, 6906 Royalgreen Dr., Cincinnati, OH 45244 or visit [www.dulley.com](http://www.dulley.com).



This wireless remote security camera kit allows images from the camera to be seen on a television inside the home.

WIRELESS IMAGING

## WHERE TO SHOP

The following companies offer security systems:

- ▶ Digital Security Controls, 888-888-7838, [www.dsc.com](http://www.dsc.com)
- ▶ Honeywell, 800-573-0154, [www.security.honeywell.com](http://www.security.honeywell.com)
- ▶ Intermatic, 815-675-7000, [www.intermatic.com](http://www.intermatic.com)
- ▶ Wireless Imaging, 800-676-3402, [www.wirelessimaging.com](http://www.wirelessimaging.com)
- ▶ X10, 800-675-3044, [www.x10.com](http://www.x10.com)

“There are some effective home security measures that are fairly inexpensive.”