

An Garda Síochána

Crime Prevention Information Sheet



Home Security Lighting



Introduction

It is widely accepted that appropriate lighting can help to reduce crime and act as an effective deterrent to burglars. Appropriate lighting will help to make your home more visible to neighbours and passers-by; thereby increasing the likelihood of discovering unwanted intruders and trespassers. Lighting also helps to reduce the fear of crime.

However, it should also be noted that lighting does have limitations and so should be regarded as an aid to other security features in your home such as good physical security, intruder alarm etc.

For the purpose of this information sheet, lighting will be divided into two categories -

- Exterior, and
- Interior

Exterior Lighting

The most commonly used forms of exterior lighting are tungsten halogen floodlights and porch/bulkhead lights. Other types, including garden lights, are also available and suitable.

What type is best for me?

This is often a difficult decision to make. Some people prefer to have the bright light that a floodlight offers; others prefer the more subdued light of a lower wattage lamp.

Floodlights tend to be operated with the aid of a movement/infra-red sensor and/or a manual override switch. These are normally pre-set to switch off after a short period. It is generally not acceptable, practical or feasible to keep these lights on continuously: your electricity bill alone would be enormous, not to mention that it would be very environmentally unfriendly and very annoying to your neighbours.

If you do decide to erect such a light system it is very important that it is positioned and directed correctly. An example of a poorly positioned and poorly directed floodlight is shown in Figure 1. As you can see much of

the light is shining at the neighbouring house and also up towards the sky. The area of good light is quite small and the area nearest the house has little light. The floodlight is also positioned at a very low height thereby making it easier for an intruder/trespasser to reach and disable.



Figure 1: poor positioning and poor direction

Contrast the above with the positioning and direction shown in Figure 2. Here, the floodlight is positioned higher up the wall out of easy reach and the beam is directed to where it should be for best use. There is also less light shining on the neighbouring property and the sky.



Figure 2: good positioning and good direction

Porch/bulkhead lights, can be fitted with a photo electric sensitive cell which will activate the light at dusk and turn it off at dawn. These lights can be fitted with low

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wattage bulbs e.g. the energy saving Compact Fluorescent bulbs which are long-lasting and economical to run thereby making them more environmentally friendly.

It is important to ensure that, as with floodlights, the light is directed appropriately and that it is well-positioned. These lights can also be easily connected to a timer switch if preferred over a 'dusk to dawn' system.

If you also have a CCTV system in place, you must ensure that your lighting system is compatible with your cameras. Site testing, in different light levels, should be carried out to ensure that this is so.

Interior Lighting

At night, in most occupied homes lights are switched on and off at irregular intervals in different rooms. The light in the sitting room may be switched on for hours at a time whereas the light in another room e.g. a hallway or bedroom may only be switched on intermittently as people move in and out of these rooms. In some homes, particularly those with children, the light on the landing is often left permanently on during the night.

It is important therefore, when a home is vacant, that an impression is generated to would-be intruders that the home is in fact occupied. This can easily be achieved by leaving some lights switched on for long periods and others for short random periods. The idea being to try to recreate the normal living and lighting activities when the home is occupied. Consider all areas, both front & back, upstairs & downstairs.

There are numerous devices available to achieve this:

- plug-in mechanical or electrical timers on a wall socket connected to a table or other lamp,
- 'dusk to dawn' automatic sensors that fit into standard ceiling light sockets, and
- similar timer sensors that fit into ceiling light sockets etc.

Curtains and/or Blinds

When living in your home, curtains and/or blinds are routinely opened and closed; in particular at morning and evening times. When you are away, this is generally not the case and curtains/blinds are kept either permanently open or permanently closed.

It is a good idea to try and replicate your normal practice of opening and closing your curtains and/or blinds when you are away. A trusted neighbour or friend could be called on to do this. You, in turn, could do the same for them at another time.

It is also possible to have these controlled electronically; though this can be expensive.

Internal Noise

In an effort to create the impression that the home is occupied, it is also a good idea to turn on a radio using a plug-in timer, or similar, in one or two rooms (back and front). It may be better for the selected station to be more of a 'talk' station than a 'music' station.

Light Pollution

External light pollution is becoming a big problem in today's world. In broad terms, it can be defined as 'obtrusive and/or excessive use of artificial light' and covers a number of categories, including -

- Light trespass
- Over-illumination
- Sky glow
- Glare
- Clutter

Light pollution is an inefficient use of valuable energy. It can effect the environment, disrupt ecosystems and have adverse effects on human health.

It is important, therefore, when choosing a lighting system or lighting fixtures for your home that light pollution and its effects are also considered.

Points to Remember

To summarise, when installing security lighting, please consider each of the following -

- Avoid the creation of shadows and dark areas
- Position the light fitting out of reach
- Aim for a uniform light level
- Direct the light beam appropriately
- Consider your neighbours
- Avoid light pollution

The advice contained in this information sheet is not intended to be exhaustive or absolute. At all times it is wise to seek appropriate professional advice where additions or alterations are made to your property to improve security.

Nothing contained in this publication should be interpreted as mandatory, obligatory or designed to conflict with any statutory regulations.

Useful Contacts and Links

**The Garda National Crime Prevention Unit,
Garda H.Q., Harcourt Square, Dublin 2.
Tel: (01) 66633669
Email: crime_prevention@garda.ie**

An Garda Síochána
www.garda.ie

The Institution of Lighting Engineers
www.ile.org.uk