

New home buyers beware

Category: Information

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Home owners need to make sure that their locks are installed and operating properly before moving valuables into their new home. Improper lock installation could have devastating results and could play havoc with insurance companies. These deficiencies seem to miraculously slip through the cracks of builders and building inspectors alike.

Unfortunately, it's up to homeowners to address these hidden problems that often result in breached home security.

A good example of improper lock installation lies within the deadbolt itself. The bolt must fully extend into the strike plate (the plate that accepts the bolt), located on the door jam. Upon opening the door and turning the deadbolt key, the bolt will fully extend from the door about an inch. Once the deadbolt is fully extended you will feel a slight click. This signifies that the bolt is now in the deadlocked position. Thus, the terminology, "deadlocking bolt." If you now try to push the bolt back into the door, you will find that it will not move. This prevents an intruder from sliding the bolt into the open position from the outside of the door.

An easy way to assure that your deadbolt is locking properly is to open the door once more and extend the bolt with the inside thumb turn while the door is open. Note the position of the thumb turn, now lock the door. The thumb turn should be in the exact same position as when the door was open. If it is not, you need to dig a little more wood out of the strike side to allow the bolt to fully extend.

Locks installed upside down are another common occurrence, although not a serious problem, most residential locks require that the lock be installed so that when the key is inserted, the teeth of the key are facing up. If this is not the case, chances are your lock is installed upside down.

The problems associated with upside-down locks are not always apparent right away. However, dirt will eventually jam into the cylinder of the lock and cause the lock to stick or jam over time.

Hinges are another weak area in new home construction. Make sure that your door hinges are not missing any screws. Open the door and look at the frame side of the hinge as well as the door side to make sure you have all the screws required. Now is a good time to check and see the size of the screws used to fasten the door onto the frame. If your builder did not install three-inch screws, make sure that you install at least two three-inch screws in every hinge.

Most new sliding glass doors, whether the aluminum or vinyl type have some sort of auxiliary lock installed on the inside of the door. However, I rarely find anti-lift devices installed in the header of the frame to help prevent an intruder from lifting these doors out of the track. Self-tapping screws, available at most hardware stores will help remedy this problem by eliminating the gap between the top of the door and the header.

Lastly, don't forget to change the codes on your garage door opener. If you're not sure how to change the frequency codes, call your garage-door installer for assistance.