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President's Message -----3
 Associates News -----8
 Local Associations-----16
 Training/Education -----40
 Calendar-----42



Page 30



Page 36



Page 37



Page 31



Page 27



Page 32



Page 31



Page 36



Page 34



Page 38



Page 39

Rutgers Study Finds Alarm Systems Are Valuable Crime Fighting Tool

Study Links Burglary Reduction to Increase in Alarms Systems

A comprehensive study of five years of statistics by researchers at the Rutgers University School of Criminal Justice (SCJ) in Newark, NJ found that residential burglar alarm systems decrease crime. While other studies have concluded that most burglars avoid alarm systems, this is the first study to focus on alarm systems while scientifically ruling out other factors that could have impacted the crime rate.

Researchers concentrated on analyzing crime data provided by the Newark Police Department. "Data showed that a steady decrease in burglaries in Newark between 2001 and 2005 coincided with an increase in the number of registered home burglar alarms," said study author Dr. Seungmug (a.k.a. Zech) Lee, who received his doctoral degree from SCJ in 2008 and presently teaches at Ohio Northern University in Ada, Ohio. "The study credits the alarms with the decrease in burglaries and the city's overall crime rate."

In short, the study found that an installed burglar alarm makes a dwelling less attractive to the would-be and active intruders and protects the home without displacing burglaries to nearby homes. The study also concluded that the deterrent effect of alarms is felt in the community at large.

"Neighborhoods in which burglar alarms were densely installed have fewer incidents of residential burglaries than the neighborhoods with fewer burglar alarms," the study noted.

The study was conducted with the cooperation of the Newark Police Department and reviewed five years of police data. The more than 300-page study was conducted over a two-year period and funded by the non-profit **Alarm Industry Research and Educational Foundation (AIREF)**. SCJ Professors George L. Kelling, Marcus Felson and Ronald

V. Clarke and Professor Robert D. McCrie of John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York were members of the study's Faculty Advisory Committee. Dr. Clarke served as committee chair.

"This type of study assists police departments to effectively deploy their limited resources," said Newark Police Director Garry McCarthy. "The School of Criminal Justice provides valuable insight into the positive impact alarm systems can have in preventing residential burglaries."

"This is the most comprehensive study of its kind that has ever been conducted," said Dr. Lee. "By using sophisticated in-depth research techniques, we were able to eliminate the variables that impact crime rates and focus directly on the impact alarm systems have on residential burglaries."

The study noted that "technology innovations" have increased the availability of home security systems to middle-class homeowners and that technology has made the systems more dependable. "Computers, printed circuits, digital communicators, and microprocessors have refined monitoring and signaling technology, and modern electronic sensors now include ultrasonic, infrared and microwave devices which were formerly available only in more sophisticated commercial and industrial applications," said Dr. Lee.

Researchers also pointed to an earlier study based on interviews with burglars ("Burglars on the Job 1994," Northeastern University Press) to support their conclusions. That study concluded, "Most offenders, though, wanted to avoid alarms altogether and, upon encountering such devices, abandoned all thought of attacking the dwelling."

For more information about "The Impact of Home Burglar Alarm Systems on Residential Burglaries" study, visit www.AIREF.org.



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