



DON'T LOCK OUT THIS UK HOME SECURITY WEEK

With **UK Home Security Week** upon us (24 – 30 September) the UK's leading trade association for the locksmithing profession is advising homeowners to consider locks and keys in the equation when reviewing their home security.

The **Master Locksmiths Association (MLA)** is warning homeowners that, although UK Home Security Week is a welcome reminder of the importance of reviewing security, they should be wary of taking on some of the jobs better left to the professionals.

The MLA voiced concerns that by replacing their own locks homeowners could actually cause greater damage to themselves by compromising their insurance cover, significantly reducing security levels of their home and potentially putting their family and positions at risk.

Dr Steffan George, development director for the MLA said: "Whilst we agree with the founders of UK Home Security Week that regularly reviewing your home security is vitally important, homeowners can be unaware of the long-term damage they can do by taking on some of the more expert jobs themselves such as replacing locks.

"Our members are often called out to fix badly fitted locks, replace inferior quality locks and fit locks to new doors where a customer has accidentally caused irreversible damage to the original ones.

"As well as potentially costing more money to repair, taking on DIY jobs such as replacing your own locks can mean that homeowners use systems of inferior quality, such as locks that do not meet European safety standards, and systems which are not suitable for their security needs – for example, they may make escape in emergency situations difficult. A professional on the other hand, would be able to offer appropriate advice to avoid potential pitfalls.

“Sadly our members also see a lot of customers invalidating their insurance after fitting the wrong locks to their doors and windows which means if they are unfortunate enough to be burgled they cannot claim for any of the damage or stolen items.

“Our own mystery shopper research found that 63 per cent of staff in the UK’s leading home and DIY outlets including Focus, B&Q and Homebase rated poorly when it came to lock knowledge, with only 15 per cent of our shoppers rating the advice they received as satisfactory. Indicating that as well as not fitting their own locks, homeowners cannot always rely on the advice of staff in large DIY stores to guide them on suitable products.”

The MLA offers a checklist for lock-related home security:

- Make sure you have good quality and professionally fitted locks on external doors
- Consider when your locks were last changed and if anyone else could potentially have access to your home. If you are concerned ask a qualified locksmith to install a restricted or patented locking system whereby keys can only be copied with proof of ownership – meaning only those you give permission to can access your home
- Check the condition of your window locks and frames and seek advice if you feel they are not appropriate or solid enough
- Ensure that any locks fitted to your home meet your insurance requirements – ask a locksmith for advice if you are unclear
- Make sure all internal doors to conservatories and garages have appropriate locks and the frames are in a good condition – ensure windows in garages are also checked
- Side windows can be smashed to reach keys and gain entry so consider adding reinforced glass or even blocking up the glass if you feel appropriate. Decorative grilles and bars can also vastly improve security without being unsightly
- Consider installing top and bottom bolts on French doors or add sash jammers to UPVC doors
- Statistics show that thieves are increasingly breaking into homes to steal car keys so don’t make it easy for them by leaving keys in view
- Outouses such as sheds and garages should be locked with a suitably approved lock – a good source of advice is independent security product testing house Sold Secure (www.soldsecure.com)
- Lock any side or back gates with an approved lock

- And finally, never keep your key in the lock or in view. Always find a safe hiding place for your keys – preferably not a little cupboard or hook labelled ‘keys’ next to your door!

Steffan concludes: “Locksmithing is a specialist skill that takes plenty of practice, dedication and knowledge of a large number of systems and regulations; so changing locks is one job that really should be left to the professionals.

“When it comes to hiring someone to do work in your home it can be difficult to know who to trust so make sure you carry out thorough research when selecting a locksmith. The easiest way to ensure you hire a professional locksmith is to hire a member of a recognised and respected trade association such as the MLA.

“However, make sure you know what a trade association represents – rather than an association that is little more than a logo, members of the MLA for instance have access to ongoing training, agree to a code of conduct, are informed of regulation changes and are regularly inspected ensuring members are skilled and best placed to offer suitable advice. After the MLA changed the law on the vetting of locksmiths the association is now the only locksmithing trade association able to perform standard level CRB checks on members.”

Visit www.locksmiths.co.uk to find an MLA licensed locksmith or visit:

<http://www.locksmiths.co.uk/homesecurity/> to find home security guidelines.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

Issued on behalf of the Master Locksmiths Association by Karol Marketing Group. For further information, pictures or to set up interviews please contact Hayley Ford or Jenny Rowley on 0191 265 7765 or email hayley@karolmarketing.com / Jenny@karolmarketing.com

About the MLA

The Master Locksmiths Association (MLA) was established over 50 years ago to set and promote standards of conduct, practice and materials within locksmithing. The MLA is recognised as the authoritative body for locksmithing by the police, home office and other leading organisations such as the British Standards Institute.

As a not for profit association, the MLA ensure its member companies undergo strict vetting procedures so the public, government and industry receive the appropriate service and

advice. MLA members share the ethos that 'skill and integrity' remain paramount in locksmithing and are able to provide sound advice based on knowledge and experience.

A list of approved MLA companies are listed on the MLA website, for further information please visit: www.locksmiths.co.uk