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# ARM YOURSELF!

PLANNING FOR THE WORST MIGHT SAVE YOUR LIFE!



From left: Hennie Barnard and Heidi Bartle of the Rustenburg Crime Combating Forum (RCCF).

**Rustenburg** – The Rustenburg Community Policing Forum (CPF) recently hosted Piet Bekker for an awareness campaign during which they armed their members with the most powerful weapon against criminals – knowledge! The *Platinum Weekly* newspaper joined the CPF at the WA van Zyl hall for this presentation on Saturday, 24 June 2017, to get a few tips on securing your home.

Bekker has devoted 30 years of his life to understanding the thoughts and methods of criminals. Bekker has gained up-close knowledge of criminals' *modus operandi*, as he started his career as a uniformed officer, until he eventually spearheaded the Phokeng Murder division in 1998. By using his knowledge he was able to create a few simple methods that might save your life.

**The first step towards prevention is assessment,** assessing where you are vulnerable and where criminals might break in or overpower or lay and wait for you. Removing that vulnerable position significantly decreases your chances of being robbed, hijacked, held hostage or worse...

Look around your premises and try to "think like a criminal." Ask yourself "how would I break in here? Where can I hide, how can I gain access to this property?" Rid yourself of those weak points by, for example, adding an additional flood light or by removing a bush. In doing so, you will be removing the foothold that criminals could use to get access to you and your family.

The second part to improve your security is

with **early warning**. Something as simple as ensuring that all your outside lights work and that your floodlights are kept in a working condition improves your safety. Regularly testing your armed reaction services or creating a WhatsApp group with your neighbours exclusively for security, results in increased protection.

Bekker told the *Platinum Weekly* newspaper that reliable early warning is one of your strongest allies in the fight against these criminals. "Try to avoid false alarms by ensuring your security equipment is well maintained, and if at all possible teach your dogs to only bark at real threats. The earlier warning you have that criminals are trying to access your property, the smaller the chance of them catching you unaware," Bekker said.

According to a recent study, one of the best and most difficult security strategies that deterred criminals the most was small lap dogs that sleep inside the house and are difficult to reach by criminals. Large dogs that sleep outside are often poisoned as the first step in accessing your premises -often a few days before the actual robbery.

The next part is to be **prepared, by having a contingency plan** and drilling that plan until it becomes second nature, even at 3 in the morning, the time when criminals try to break into your home.

Your plan can be something as simple as pressing the panic button, grabbing your cell phone and ensuring that your family retreats to a previously agreed upon, easily defendable location. This can be a space such as a communal bathroom or a large closet.

What is essential in this step is that the entire family knows what to do if the situation should ever occur, so agree on the strategy beforehand and practice it at least twice a month. It would be wise to join your Community Crime Watch, even if you cannot help patrol at night but simply so that you have people you can contact when you believe you are in danger.

**DO NOT GO OUTSIDE!** Too often criminals gain access to secured homes by luring victims outside, something as simple and innocent as opening a garden tap is enough to tempt home owners out of their secure homes and once you're outside they can overpower you. When in doubt, press the panic button.

Lastly, it is important to know your rights. We have all heard some terrible story of a home owner who faced prison time or financial ruin because of something they did to a would-be criminal. The largest portions of these are urban legends, created to scare folks into a state of fear.

"The truth is that you still have rights when criminals try to access your home and when you believe your life is in danger, you have a right to defend yourself, **know your rights**. I promise, the criminals know theirs, so you should too," Bekker said. For more information visit [www.acts.co.za](http://www.acts.co.za).



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