

Burglary vs Robbery: What's the Difference?

Posted by: Alex Schenker Updated: October 14, 2014 in Home Security

The terms burglary and robbery are very often confused with each other by those who have little familiarity with the world of criminal justice. However, there is quite a significant difference between these two terms from a criminal justice point of view. In this article we will cover the differences between these two property crimes including the specifics of each as defined by law. And if you are reading this article, chances are good that you have experienced one of these crimes and may benefit from reading our review of the best home security systems today.

Property Crimes

Both burglary and robbery are considered to be property crimes in that they involve either the theft of property from an individual or the unlawful entry to a structure with the intent to steal or commit a felony.

Burglary vs Robbery

Robbery and burglary are both crimes that involve theft and it is the circumstances that surround each that defines their differences. When it comes to the legal definition of theft there are actually a number of categories of theft in addition to burglary and robbery. These additional theft crimes include: larceny, theft and extortion.

Robbery

Robbery is defined by the law as taking or trying to take something from someone that has value by utilizing intimidation, force or threat. In order for robbery to take place, a victim must be present at the scene and can occur with a single victim or, in cases like bank hold ups, multiple victims.

Burglary

Burglary is defined by the law as the unlawful entry to a structure to commit theft or a felony. In order for burglary to take place, a victim does not have to be present. When a burglary takes place, the structure being unlawfully entered can be any number of building types including business offices, personal homes and even garden sheds. Burglary is not the term used for crimes committed on cars.

Larceny

Larceny is a term that is similar to burglary; however, it does not involve illegal entry to a structure using attempted forcible, non-forcible or forcible entry methods. The exception to this rule is the case of burglary of a motor vehicle which is referred to as larceny. Under all conditions, whether a vehicle is left with the doors locked and security system on or whether the doors or windows were left open, vehicle "burglary" crimes are referred to as larceny.

Theft

Many times the term theft is used as a general term by the public to refer to the illegal taking of an item. As it happens, theft is defined specifically depending upon the jurisdiction in which it is being prosecuted but many times it is a term used as a synonym for larceny.

Extortion

Extortion is a specific crime in which an individual forces someone to do something against their will by threatening them with damage to the person's reputation, financial hardship, violence, property damage or threat of violence. Extortion differs from robbery in that victims who are being extorted willingly hand over the item being extorted in an attempt to avoid the threat being used against them. Depending upon the jurisdiction in which extortion is being prosecuted, it can be considered theft or larceny.

And remember:

- Report any unusual cars or activity to the police
- Don't open your door to anyone you don't know
- Please lock your doors when you are in the house or going out "just for a minute or two"
- Please use your alarm if you have one
- Let your neighbors know if you will be away on vacation so they are aware you are not home
- Notify and fill out PVE Police Vacation form available on the PVENW.org site

