

Unit 3: Property Crime



Time Required: 2.5 hours

Resources Needed

- OVC *Listen and Learn DVD* (clip: Burglary/Leanna)
- *Participant Workbook*
- TV and DVD player
- Chalkboard or tear sheets

Prior to the Session

- Consider gathering local and state statistics and/or newspaper or article clippings for the discussion about property crime trends.
- Research your state's statutes related to property crime; be prepared to provide information to participants about these statutes.



Objectives

- Define **property crime**.
- Explain the impact of property crime on victims.
- Discuss thoughts and feelings about being held accountable for property loss crimes.
- Apply knowledge of insurance to property losses.



Facilitator Tip

- Ensure that property crimes are not "rated" as being less serious crimes.
- Confront participants' dismissive language such as, "It was just a burglary," or "It's only graffiti."
- Participants may attempt to rationalize that victims will be compensated by insurance.

What Is Property Crime?

Property crime is the illegal taking or destroying of someone's property or land without threats or force. Auto theft, burglary, forgery, shoplifting, and larceny (theft) are examples of the illegal taking of property. Arson and vandalism are crimes that damage land or property.

Although property crimes are not defined as using threats or force, this does not mean they are victimless crimes or "just" minor offenses. Offenders can't commit crimes against property; crimes are committed against people. Even if the victim does not witness the crime, it may be a frightening, life-changing, and disturbing event. Offenders can cause victims significant fear or distress and can disrupt their lives by stealing a car or stereo, burglarizing a home or business, setting a building on fire, or shoplifting.



**Facilitator Note**

Each unit begins with words that may be unfamiliar to participants but are important for understanding the material in this unit.

Have participants read the “Words To Know” aloud.

Delivery options include reading the terms aloud yourself, writing the words on a chalkboard or tear sheet, selecting participants to read words aloud, or dividing participants into small groups or pairs and having them discuss the terms among themselves. For all delivery options, survey participants to ensure that they understand the terms before moving on.

**Words To Know**

Arson: Any willful or malicious burning or attempt to burn, with or without intent to defraud, a dwelling house, public building, motor vehicle or aircraft, or personal property of another.

Burglary: The unlawful entry of a structure to commit a felony or theft.

Embezzlement: The unlawful misappropriation or misapplication by an offender to his/her own use or purpose of money, property, or some other thing of value entrusted to his/her care, custody, or control.

Extortion: The use of fear of death, injury, property loss, or reputation to induce or compel another to deliver property or perform some act or omission.

Insurance deductible: The amount an insured person is responsible for before an insurance company will make payment.

Irreplaceable: Something that cannot be replaced if lost or damaged.

Larceny-theft (except motor vehicle theft): The unlawful taking, carrying, leading, or riding away of property from the possession or constructive possession of another. Examples are thefts of bicycles, motor vehicle parts and accessories, shoplifting, pocket-picking, or the stealing of any property or article that is not taken by force and violence or by fraud.

Memorabilia: Items associated with notable events and, therefore, worthy of being remembered; souvenirs.

Sentimental value: The value someone places on an object because of personal or emotional associations rather than material worth.

Vandalism: To willfully or maliciously destroy, injure, disfigure, or deface any public or private property, real or personal, without the consent of the owner or person having custody or control by cutting, tearing, breaking, marking, painting, drawing, covering with filth, or any other such means as may be specified by local law.

**Journaling Activity**

Review the list of issues that victims of property crimes have to deal with. Either individually or in small groups, have participants list additional issues in their workbooks.

Property crime victims have to deal with:

- Having their privacy violated.
- Being scared to stay in their burglarized homes.
- Being scared to return to work where the crime occurred.
- Seeing their businesses burned down.
- Waiting to have their property returned.
- Cleaning up after their homes or businesses have been vandalized.
- Filling out insurance paperwork.

Group Discussion

Discuss participants' responses to the journaling activity above. Help participants understand the scope of what property crime victims experience.



In the News: Property Crime Trends

This page offers recent statistics about property crimes. If you have gathered local and state statistics, integrate them into your discussion on property crime trends. If you found newspaper or magazine articles relevant to the topic area, read them out loud or assign participants into groups of three to discuss and then present the information to the larger group.

When discussing property crime trends:

- Select participants to read aloud the property crime trends.
- Use local news articles, reviewing them carefully to avoid overly complex issues.
- Make sure that articles do not identify offenders in your facility or victims in your community.
- Survey participants to ensure that they understand the trends.



Examples of Property Crime

Participants are asked to read nine examples of property crime and to consider the impact that each had on victims. You may want them to substitute the names of their family members or friends in the scenarios. You can also share with participants any state-specific statutes related to property crime. Remember to use varied delivery options when discussing the examples of property crime.



Triad Session

Have participants write down their answers to the questions under each type of property crime. Then, in groups of three, have participants share their responses with one another and offer feedback. Finally, bring the larger group back together to review and discuss participants' responses.

What Is the Impact of Property Crime?

Criminal behaviors such as property crime cause a ripple effect on a number of life areas: financial, physical, emotional, and religious/spiritual.



Chalkboard Exercise

Have participants take turns reading the lists in their workbooks (p. 9) and come up with additional examples, including some of the following:

<p>Financial</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Out-of-pocket costs • Repairs to property • Burglar alarm purchases • Acquisition of security services • Wage loss • Legal fees • _____ • _____ • _____ 	<p>Physical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fatigue • Stomach pain • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____
<p>Emotional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sadness • Guilt • Shame • Embarrassment • Depression • Vulnerability • _____ • _____ • _____ 	<p>Religious/Spiritual</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questioning faith • Questioning how and why this crime could happen to a good person • Forgiveness issues • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____



Facilitator Note

If participants say they have never committed property crime, ask them whether they or someone they know was ever a victim of property crime and what the impact of that crime was.



OVC Listen and Learn DVD

Leanna and her family were the victims of a home burglary.

Consider stopping and starting the video to reinforce key points and then initiate discussion at the end. Possible discussion and answers include the following:

What were the financial losses?

- Cleaning up the crime scene
- The loss of time it took to report the crime and work with the police

- Replacing the door, TV, and camcorder

How did this burglary affect Leanna and her family?

- The loss of the videotape of her newborn son had a devastating emotional impact that made her upset and angry—it was something that could not be replaced.
- Every day she discovered something else the robbers had stolen.
- She and her family lost a sense of security in their home, where they should feel safe.
- Leanna suffered from knowing that her children feel her lack of security.

Being Accountable for Your Crimes

Property crime has a serious financial and emotional impact on victims. Victims suffer from a loss of security in their own homes, businesses, or workplaces. Their privacy is violated, and they may never regain the sense of security they once had.



Group Discussion

Have participants read the accountability statements in their workbooks (p. 10) and share their thoughts with the group.



Facilitator Note

If time permits after covering the material in this unit, you may conduct the additional activities listed on the next few pages before debriefing participants. You may also want to schedule a guest victim/survivor speaker.

Additional Activities

Each of the following units concludes with a series of activities, whose theme is to reinforce the following key concepts: areas of impact, short- and long-term effects on victims, the ripple effect of crime, and offender accountability. **Participants should complete at least one activity prior to hearing a victim speaker.**

Activity A – What is Important to You?

Objective: Participants experience what it's like to be a victim of property crime.

Have participants complete the “What Is Important to You?” worksheet, located at the end of this unit. Then, ask participants to discuss the following in small groups or as a class:

- Why did they choose the item they did?
- How do they feel about having the item stolen?
- How do they feel about not having a choice about being victimized?

Activity B – Write a Story/Role Play

Objective: Participants focus on the wide range of specific financial losses to Leanna's family featured in OVC's DVD *Victim Impact: Listen and Learn*.

Play Leanna's clip again and have participants complete either of the following assignments:

- **Write a story/role play** that follows Leanna's family for a week after the burglary, focusing on the financial impact.

Have participants include at least some of these elements in their stories: *How much does it cost a family member per hour to take time off from work to have the house cleaned up, file a police report, wait for the repair person to replace the door, wait for the security system installation, and find the receipts for the stolen items?*

Make sure that participants consider:

- Cost of replacing personal items.
- Cost of repairing the broken door.
- Insurance costs.
- Legal fees.
- Security system.
- Other costs?

Role play Leanna and her children discussing their feelings about the burglary.

Possible role plays: *The children may ask their mother to promise they will be safe and the mother may be hesitant to make that promise. The children may refuse to talk about the crime. The children may ask how soon they will have a new TV. The children may be afraid to be away from Leanna. Leanna may not be able to talk without being emotional and this scares the children.*

Activity C – The Sanchez Family

Objective: Participants begin to personalize crime and focus on the impact of crime on an elderly couple and their grandson.

Have participants, individually or in small groups, complete “The Sanchez Family” worksheet, located at the end of the unit. The worksheet provides a property crime scenario and asks readers to answer questions related to the scenario. The scenario, questions, and possible answers to the questions follow.

Tony takes his grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Sanchez, to cash their Social Security checks and then they rent a few movies. When they return home, they see that it has been broken into. The house is a mess. The following items have been stolen: TV, \$300 from a cookie jar, and jewelry from Mrs. Sanchez’s grandmother. In addition, these items have been broken or destroyed: the cookie jar, Mr. and Mrs. Sanchez’s wedding picture, clothes (thrown around the bedroom), and a religious book.

What might Mr. and Mrs. Sanchez be thinking or feeling?

Possible answers:

- Feelings: Fear, anger, sadness, insecurity, vulnerability.
- Thoughts: Why our house? Will the police even show up? What will our insurance cover? What if we had been at home? Will the offenders come back?

What might Tony be thinking or feeling?

Possible answers:

- Feelings: Fear, anger, sadness.
- Thoughts: They looked so scared and sad. How can I protect my grandparents? They don’t have the money to replace what was taken.

What might Mr. and Mrs. Sanchez experience in the next few days?

Possible answers: Waiting for the police to show up, deciding if it is safe to stay in the house, getting the front door fixed, cleaning up the house, dealing with the media, finding their insurance policy and calling their agent, and telling family, friends, and neighbors.

What might the emotional impact be on Mr. and Mrs. Sanchez 6 months from now?

Possible answers: Fear, anger, sadness, vulnerability.

What are the irreplaceable items that were taken or destroyed?

Possible answers: Family jewelry, wedding picture and frame, and possibly the religious book if it is a family heirloom.

Which items will the insurance company cover?

- TV
- Money
- Religious book
- Lock on front door
- Jewelry
- Cookie jar
- Wedding picture frame
- New burglar alarm

Answer: Insurance will not necessarily pay full value for replacement. Insurance companies may require proof of value, which may not be available for many of the stolen items.

Activity D – Elisa

Objective: Participants focus on the financial cost of property crime.

Have participants, individually or in small groups, complete the “Elisa” worksheet, located at the end of this unit. The worksheet provides a property crime scenario and asks questions related to that scenario. The scenario, questions, and possible answers to the questions follow.

Elisa makes \$7 an hour working 20 hours a week in a restaurant. She is studying photography and recently bought a \$500 camera with her tax refund, overtime pay, and birthday money. Someone broke into Elisa’s locker at work and stole the camera. She does not have insurance.

How many hours of work will it take to replace the camera?

Answer: \$500 divided by \$7 equals 71 hours of work.

How long will it take Elisa to replace the camera?

Answer: About 3.5 weeks. 71.5 hours x \$7 per hour equals \$500.50. Seventy-one and a half hours is approximately 3.5 weeks.

Is it realistic to think that Elisa can use all of her work money to replace her camera in that time period? What other expenses may she have?

Possible answers: Elisa may have crime-related expenses (e.g., loss of wages from time taken off work to identify suspects, attend court). She may suffer wage loss if she requests time off because she is uncomfortable returning to work right away. She is also likely to have noncrime-related expenses (e.g., rent, car payment/transportation, food, utility bills).

If the offender is charged with a crime and ordered to pay restitution, how soon will Elisa receive restitution payments for the camera?

Answer: Payment of restitution will depend on the offender’s custody disposition, his or her ability to work and willingness to pay restitution, and the correctional system method of collection.

Activity E – Shanay

Objective: Participants focus on the seriousness of property crime and begin to personalize victimization. Read the following scenario to participants:

Eight-year-old Shanay is in front of her school waiting to be picked up. Three older kids walk up to her and surround her so she can’t move. One of the kids takes her backpack from her and then pretends to punch her.

Have participants answer the following questions:

- Is this a crime worth reporting to the police? Why or why not?
- Is this a serious crime to Shanay? To her family?
- If you don't think this is a serious crime, would it change your mind if you knew Shanay?
- How would you feel if Shanay was your sister?

Recommended Speaker

Have appropriate speakers address the class on the topic of property crimes. Listening to victim/survivor speakers may be uncomfortable for offenders. Make sure to instruct participants beforehand about appropriate behavior during the speaker's presentation. (See "Implementing the Curriculum" for information about recruiting, selecting, and screening speakers and on how to prepare both speakers and participants for the experience.)



Discussion/Wrap-Up

Discuss what participants learned in the Property Crime unit. Address any questions they may have.

Unit 3 Participant Worksheets

Activity C – The Sanchez Family

Tony takes his grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Sanchez, to cash their Social Security checks and then they rent a few movies. When they go home, they see that it has been broken into. The house is a mess. The following items have been stolen: TV, \$300 from a cookie jar, and jewelry from Mrs. Sanchez's grand- mother. In addition, these items have been broken or destroyed: the cookie jar, Mr. and Mrs. Sanchez's wedding picture, clothes (thrown around the bedroom), and a religious book.

What might Mr. and Mrs. Sanchez be thinking or feeling?

What might Tony be thinking or feeling?

What might Mr. and Mrs. Sanchez experience in the next few days?

What might the emotional impact be on Mr. and Mrs. Sanchez 6 months from now?

What are the irreplaceable items that were taken or destroyed?

Which items will the insurance company cover?

- TV
- Money
- Religious book
- Lock on front door
- Jewelry
- Cookie jar
- Wedding picture frame
- New burglar alarm

Activity D – Elisa

Elisa makes \$7 an hour working 20 hours a week in a restaurant. She is studying photography and recently bought a \$500 camera with her tax refund, overtime pay, and birthday money. Someone broke into Elisa’s locker at work and stole the camera. She does not have insurance.

How many hours of work will it take to replace the camera?

How long will it take Elisa to replace the camera?

Is it realistic to think that Elisa can use all of her work money to replace her camera in that time period? What other expenses may she have?

If the offender is charged with a crime and ordered to pay restitution, how soon will Elisa receive restitution payments for the camera?
