

# HOW TO PROTECT YOUR VALUABLES FROM THEFT

One of the most effective tools you can use to retrieve property stolen from your home is a simple electric engraving pen. With this pen, you can inscribe your name or a number on the most valuable items in and around your home. Before you do this, check with local police to see which they prefer you use: your name, driver's license number, social security number or other identifier.

Engraving your name or number on your valuables helps deter robbery in two ways: first, you discourage the thief since marked property is much more difficult to sell, and second, it is much easier to catch and prosecute a thief when goods in his/her possession are easily identifiable as stolen.

Billions of dollars worth of property stolen each year is never returned to the owners. Why? Because without some identifying mark or number, the police are unable to trace the stolen property back to the owner. More than 50% property recovered by the police is eventually auctioned off or destroyed because the goods have no identifying characteristics.

In some cities, local law enforcement agencies will lend you and your neighbors an engraving pen free of charge, for several days. If this service is not available to you, you can purchase an inexpensive electric pen from your local hardware store for as little as \$10 or \$15. This small investment could provide big relief in the event a robbery occurs.

Items already marked with a serial number—such as credit cards, TVs, cameras, computers, monitors, radios, stereos, appliances, etc.—may not have to be engraved with your name or personal number. Check with local police first. If they recommend you inscribe your identifying mark on serialized items, inscribe this information just above the manufacturer's serial number. Be sure to write down

the serial numbers and keep the list in a safe place.

On unserialized property, inscribe your name or number on the upper right corner of the backside of each item. Should you decide to sell or discard the item at a later date, you should invalidate your number by using the engraving pen or any sharp tool to draw a single line through your name or number from upper left to the lower right hand corner. Do not deface your name or number in any other way. It is also advisable, when selling "marked" property, to write out a simple receipt and specify on it that you were the previous owner; indicate the name or number used by you. This could prevent legal hassles for the new owner at a later time.

To protect smaller valuable items such as jewelry, silverware, etc., it is wise to take a photo of each item.

After you have marked and/or photographed all your valuables, make a detailed list of these items and keep it in a safe place. When new items are acquired, add them to your list. As other valuables are sold or discarded, cross them off the list.

If you use credit cards, they should also be recorded on your list. Either list your account number and expiration date of each card, or make a photocopy for your records.