

Dear Friend,

Each month, BOWA Home Advisor provides you with important tips on how to improve and protect your home's value. We hope the following is helpful.



Custom Home
McLean, VA

Are your valuables properly protected?

You've double checked the locks on the doors and windows and your home alarm has been activated. Good start. But, what would happen to your valuables and important documents in the unfortunate event of a home intrusion or fire? Many homeowners are opting to install residential security safes to protect family heirlooms, collectibles, jewelry and critical documents from the devastating effects of such events.

If you decide to purchase a home safe, the first step is determining what size you need. To start, take an inventory of the value, quantity, size and types of items you wish to protect. In-home safes come in a range of sizes, weights and configurations. On one end of the spectrum are models that measure about 24-inches and weigh in at roughly 160 pounds, while others range up to walk-in sized units weighing 1,700 pounds or more.

Your inventory will also help to determine the level and type of security that is most appropriate to protect your belongings. When making this determination, it is important to understand that no safe is entirely impenetrable. Essentially, what the safe will provide is time – the time your belongings will be protected from the heat of a fire or a burglar's attempts to gain access. Therefore, it is recommended that you consider a safe that has undergone rigorous testing and is certified by an independent group, such as Underwriters' Laboratories (UL).

UL hires experienced safe crackers to test the security resistance of residential safes. To receive their Residential Security Rating, a safe must pass four stringent tests. Three attacks are performed to the door, locking mechanism and handle using just about every conceivable method of drilling, chiseling, punching and prying. A fourth attempt is made trying to gain access through the sidewalls. A rating is then assigned based on how long the safe cracker was held at bay, ranging from 15 minutes to two hours.

Some UL-listed high-security safes also carry a fire-protection rating. There are different levels of fire ratings with basic packages ranging from 1200 degrees (the temperature of a normal house fire) for 20 minutes to the highest level of 1700 degrees for one hour. More expensive cement-lined fire safes can carry up to a two-hour rating and weigh twice as much as the normal home safe.

Another important consideration is where to install the safe. One option is to conceal the safe in the thickness of the wall or floor. As they tend to be smaller, it is recommended that these units be secured directly to the masonry so they are not easily pried out and carried off. Alternatively, safes can be built to fit and match the decor of closets, furniture or cabinetry. Smaller cabinet-type units can easily be bolted down making them virtually impossible to move. While some larger free-standing models are inherently too heavy to cart off, but may require additional reinforcements to the floor below. Also, it's important to decide whether you'll place the safe on the first or second floor of your home. Generally, a higher fire-rated safe is recommended for upstairs as heat rises.

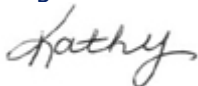
Finally, you'll need to determine how you want to configure the interior. Do you want customized, lined jewelry drawers made of handcrafted exotic wood? Adjustable spaces that allow for the storage of taller valuables, such as guns or archery equipment? Or filing cabinets and a media storage box specially designed for documents, photographs and computer discs. You can even add lighting, dehumidifiers and other customized conveniences.

The possibilities are nearly limitless with high-end residential security safes. However, careful planning and research are critical to ensuring a security solution that works for your specific needs. Once the homework is done, the peace of mind a quality residential safe may provide is immeasurable.

For your convenience, past issues of the *BOWA Home Advisor*, are available in the 'About Us' section of our [web site](#).

If you would like more information on any of these topics or if there are other ways we can be of service, please contact [BOWA Builders](#).

Regards.



Kathy Kelly
BOWA Builders, Inc.
kathyk@bowa.com
phone: (703) 734-9050
www.bowa.com

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