



Home Security Bars

**SECURITY BARS can help keep your family safe...
Did you know they can also trap you in a deadly fire?**

Many people are afraid of being victims of crime. To protect themselves, their families and their properties, they have installed security bars on windows and doors to keep intruders out. What they don't often realize is they may be trapping themselves in a life-threatening situation.

How then can you protect yourself from crime and still be safe in the event of fire?

Safe and Secure?



Due to a heightened fear of crime, people are taking measures to secure their homes and discourage intruders from entering. These actions often are taken without consideration of fire safety. And despite a downward trend in overall fire deaths, the number of fire deaths related to illegal security bars is on the rise. In 1988, five people perished in an incendiary fire in a single-family dwelling in Texas, and in 1989, another four lives were lost, also in Texas. Six people perished in a 1990 Florida fire. In 1993, seven children died in a Detroit house fire and eight family members perished in Mississippi. In the Bay Area, four family members died in a house fire in the City of Milpitas in February 1995 while several family members perished in another fire in East Palo Alto in July 1997. In all these incidents, security bars on windows and locked doors prevented escape from the fire and also prohibited firefighters' rescue attempts.

The Problem

- People are afraid of being victims of crime.
- Because of this fear, many people are blocking themselves in their homes.
- Many of the security measures being used to keep criminals OUT are trapping residents IN during emergencies.
- Older adults and children have the greatest risk of dying in a home fire. (They also often need the most help in getting out in an emergency.)

Most fire deaths related to security bars occur in low-income neighborhoods – already a high-risk population.

What then should you do?

You can still get out of your home safely in the event of a fire even if you have security bars on the windows and doors in your home. This is only possible with the use of **QUICK-RELEASE MECHANISMS**. These devices operate from inside, and allow bars to be opened for emergency escape. They should be approved devices which would easily open without the use of a key, special knowledge, or effort, in other words, everyone in your household should be able to open the window to get out.



Some of the types pictured on the right include a handle device, a push-button device, and a foot-pedal device. Retrofitting is not very expensive and can be easily completed by a contractor.

Grants are also available to assist low-income families. Request an application from the Fire Department.

Now a Safety Requirement

In 1998, the City of Milpitas adopted a Home Security Bar Retrofitting Ordinance. This law requires all existing home security bars, grates, and grills installed on bedroom windows or home doors to be fitted with quick release mechanisms to enable occupants to escape in the event of a fire. The City of Milpitas has enacted this life-saving measure to protect the public in the event of residential fires.

Complete Fire-Safety

Having a quick release device installed on windows and doors is not enough. You also need to have a Home Fire Escape Plan.

- Draw a simple floor plan that shows two exits (primary and secondary) out of each room.
- Have a working smoke detector.
- Make sure windows and doors open easily and are wide enough to allow escape.
- Make sure each family member knows how to operate all security bar quick release mechanisms.
- Choose a special meeting place for all family members outside the home.
- Know and practice E.D.I.T.H. – Exit Drills in the Home, and use it to identify and correct obstructions of doors and windows needed for escape.

If a fire started in your home, make sure you and your family know how to escape.



**For more information, call the Milpitas Fire Department,
Public Education Section at (408) 586-3365**

Security Bars Grant Application

The form may be printed, filled out and mailed to the City.
(See requirements below.)

Residential Security Bar Retrofitting Program

Low Income and Very Low Income Grant Application Guidelines

If you are interested in obtaining reimbursement for installing quick release mechanisms and installing smoke detectors, or removing bars from your bedroom windows, please read the following to determine if you qualify for the grant program.

If you determine you do qualify, complete the application and accompanying information and submit this to the Fire department.

Applicant Qualifications:

- Eligibility Requirements: Applicants must have occupied their dwelling for a minimum of six months prior to submittal of an application for a grant.
- Income Limits: Applicants must have incomes within the limits shown by category on the schedule below.
- Income verification and beneficiaries: A means to verify income must be submitted with the application. Examples include W-2 forms and check stubs.
- Maximum amount of grant is \$ 1,000. (Additional amounts may be given, depending upon the circumstances.)
- Use of grant funds: The grants are to be used to comply with the security bar program, i.e. retrofit security bars on windows and doors which have been illegally or improperly installed and to purchase and install smoke detectors.

Income Limits:

	1 Person	2 Persons	3 Persons	4 Persons	5 Persons	6 Persons	7 Persons	8 Persons
Very low income	30550	34900	39300	43650	47150	50650	54150	57600
Lower income	48350	55250	62150	69050	74550	80100	85600	91150
Median income	61100	69850	78550	87300	94300	101250	108250	115250
Moderate income	73350	83800	94300	104750	113150	121500	129900	138250

**City of Milpitas
Residential Security Bar Retrofitting Program**

Grant Application

Please complete the following and return to Milpitas Fire Department, 455 East Calaveras Boulevard, Milpitas, Ca., 95035, Attention Patricia Joki.

Name: _____

Address: _____

How long have you lived in the above residence?

_____ years/months (circle one)

I have reviewed the eligibility requirements for the Security bar Retrofitting Program (on the reverse side of this form), and have determined I qualify to submit an application for reimbursement under these guidelines.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Phone Number: _____

After completing this application, submit this and documentation to verify your income meets the eligibility requirements to the Fire Department. If you have any questions, please contact Mike Lopez or Patricia Joki at 408-586-3365.

Thank you for your interest, we look forward to serving you.

(Please see Page 2)

City of Milpitas Residential Security Bar Retrofitting Program

Ethnicity: For reporting purposes please complete the following and submit it with your application:

Category:	# of Persons:	# of Households:
Total number of beneficiaries		
Number of low income		
Number of very low income		
Total number of low and very income		
Total number of Caucasians		
Total number of Afro-Americans		
Number of Native American		
Number of Hispanics		
Number of Asians		
Number of Female Head of Households		
Number of Elderly (age 62 or over)		
I chose not to report my ethnicity		

SECURITY BAR ORDINANCE

Chapter V-304 SECURITY BARS

V-304-1.00 FINDINGS:

The City Council recognizes that fixed security bars installed over bedroom windows can trap occupants inside their home and delay or prevent rescue efforts; and

The City Council, by adopting this ordinance, does not seek to remove from residents the right to have security bars properly installed on their bedroom windows and exit doors; and

The City Council finds that State Health & Safety Code Section 17958.4 allows the City of Milpitas to establish a date (January 1, 1998) by which all residential real property with security window bars on bedroom windows shall meet current State and local requirements for safety release mechanisms on security window bars consistent with the applicable standards in the 1995 edition of the California Building Standards Code.

V-304-2.00 DEFINITIONS AND STANDARDS:

- (a) Approved. The term "Approved" means meeting the approval of the enforcement agency, except as otherwise provided by statute, when used in connection with any system, material, type of construction, fixture or appliance as the result of investigations and tests conducted by the agency, or by reason of accepted principles or tests by national authorities, technical, health, or scientific organizations or agencies.
- (b) Emergency Escape or Rescue Door. Buildings or structures used for human occupancy shall have at least one exterior exit door which meets the requirements

for "required exit door." (See Definition in subsection (e), herein.)

- (c) Emergency Escape or Rescue Window. Basements in dwelling units and every sleeping room below the fourth story shall have at least one operable window or door approved for emergency escape or rescue which shall open directly into a public street, public alley, yard or exit court. The emergency door or window shall be operable from the inside to provide a full, clear opening without the use of separate tools.

EXCEPTION: The window or door may open into an atrium complying with building code requirements provided the window or door opens onto an exit balcony and the dwelling unit or guest room has an exit which does not open into the atrium.

Escape or rescue windows shall have a minimum net clear operable area of 5.7 square feet (0.53m²). The minimum net clear operable height dimension shall be 24 inches (610mm). The minimum net clear operable width dimension shall be 20 inches (508 mm). When windows are provided as a means of escape or rescue, they shall have a finished sill height not more than 44 inches (1118 mm) above the floor.

- (d) Emergency Escape or Rescue Window Wells. Escape and rescue windows with finished sill height below the adjacent ground elevation shall have a window well. Window wells at escape or rescue windows shall comply with the following:

The clear horizontal dimensions shall allow (1) the window to be fully opened and provide a minimum accessible net clear opening of 9 square feet (0.84 m²), with a minimum dimension of 36 inches (914 mm).

Window wells with a vertical depth of more than 44 inches (1118 mm) shall be (2) equipped with an approved permanently affixed ladder or stairs that are accessible

with the window in the fully open position. The ladder or stairs shall not encroach into the required dimensions of the window well by more than 6 inches (152 mm).

- (e) Required Exit Door. The term "Required Exit Door" means the main entry/exit from the residence. It is defined by the following measurements:

A door not less than 3 feet (914 mm) in width and not less than 6 feet 8 inches (2032 mm) in height.) When installed in exit doorways, exit doors shall be capable of opening at least 90 degrees and shall be so mounted that the clear width of the exit way is not less than 32 inches (813 mm).

- (f) Security Bars. The term "Security Bars", when used in this chapter, shall include grilles, grates, or similar devices.

V-304-3.00 DECLARATION OF PUBLIC NUISANCE

Effective January 1, 1998, it is unlawful for any person owning, leasing, renting, occupying, or having charge or possession of any residential property in the City of Milpitas to maintain security bars, grilles, grates, or similar devices on emergency escape or rescue windows, doors, or window wells, or any required exit door, is declared to be a public nuisance and shall be abated, unless:

- The devices are equipped with approved
 - (1) release mechanisms which are operable from the inside without the use of a key or special knowledge or effort; and
 - (2) detectors installed in accordance with current building code requirements.

V-304-4.00 STANDARDS FOR QUICK RELEASE MECHANISM

- (a) The quick release latch shall be actuated by a readily-accessible knob, handle or button which may be grasped by the hand

and operated by a single twist, turn, or pull of the hand, or in the alternative, by a pedal which may be pushed by the foot. The use of slide bolts, pull chains, bolts, and releases requiring both hands for actuation is prohibited. Security devices over emergency escape doors may be provided with a night-latch, deadbolt, or security chains provided such devices are openable from the inside without the use of a key or a special tool.

- (b) The quick release latch shall be unobstructed and readily visible, mounted no greater than thirty-six inches (36") from the edge of the window at a height not to exceed forty-eight inches (48") above the finished floor as measured from the center of the device and shall not require more than ten pounds (10 lbs.) of force to unlatch the security device to the fully-opened position. Any such quick release latch must be readily accessible to the occupants of the room.
- (c) Each quick release system shall be properly installed by a licensed contractor, the home owner, or other individual or entity that has obtained approval by the Fire Department.
- (d) Each system shall be installed in conjunction with smoke detectors.
- (e) Each system shall be field tested for proper operation by the Building Department prior to acceptance.
- (f) Performance standards developed by Underwriters' Laboratories or other approved listing organization acceptable to both the Fire Department and the Building Department may be used in lieu of these standards.

**V-304-5.00 STANDARD FOR SMOKE DETECTOR
INSTALLATION**

Approved smoke detectors shall be installed and maintained in all units that have bedroom

window security bars and in all common use corridors adjacent to units with bedroom window security bars. Within each unit, smoke detectors shall be located in each bedroom and hallway adjacent to a bedroom. Tenants are responsible for notifying the owner or the owner's agent in the event a smoke detector becomes inoperable. Owners and tenants shall be responsible for maintenance of smoke detector batteries.

V-304-6.00 RIGHT OF ENTRY

No person shall refuse to allow any authorized official of the City of Milpitas, upon presentation of proper credentials and upon proper notice, to enter upon any premises at any time during the hours of daylight for the purpose of inspecting or removing security bars which is in violation of Section V-304-3.00 of the Milpitas Municipal Code, which may endanger the welfare of residents of such property where a previous notice to abate the nuisance has been given.

V-304-7.00 EXAMINATION BY ENFORCEMENT OFFICER REFUSAL OF ENTRY PROHIBITED

Any person who prevents or refuses to permit the entrance of any authorized official of the City of Milpitas upon private property or public property, not including streets, to inspect security bars, to verify security bars comply with Milpitas Municipal Code Section V-304-3.00, or to remove or cause the removal of security bars declared to be a public nuisance by or pursuant to this chapter, is guilty of an infraction.

V-304-8.00 ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS AVAILABLE VIOLATION OF AN INFRACTION

Nothing in this chapter shall be deemed to prevent the City Manager from ordering the commencement of a civil proceeding to abate a public nuisance pursuant to applicable law or from pursuing any other remedy available under applicable law. Violation of the provisions of this

chapter constitutes an infraction. The Fire Chief is designated as the enforcement authority.

V-304-9.00 VIOLATION AND PENALTIES

- (a) Any person, firm or corporation violating or causing, or permitting to be violated any of the provisions of this chapter shall be deemed guilty of an infraction.
- (b) Any person, firm or corporation convicted of an infraction under the provisions of this chapter shall be punishable as provided in Government Code Section 36900. Any violation beyond the third conviction within a one-year period may be charged by the District Attorney as a misdemeanor and the penalty for conviction of the same shall be subject to a fine or imprisonment or both not to exceed the limits set forth in California Penal Code Section 19.
- (c) Each person, firm or corporation shall be guilty of a separate offense for each and every day during any portion of which any violation of any provision of this chapter is committed, continued or permitted by such person and shall be punishable accordingly.
- (d) The City Manager shall have the power to designate by written order that particular officers or employees shall be authorized to enforce particular provisions of this chapter. Officers or employees so designated shall have the authority to arrest persons who violate any of said provision.

SECTION 2: SEVERABILITY

The City Council declares that, should any provision, section, paragraph, sentence, or word of this amendment be rendered or declared invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction or by reason of any preemptive legislation, the remaining provisions, sections, paragraphs, sentences or words of said chapter hereby

adopted shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 3: OPERATIVE DATE

This ordinance shall become operative on
November 7, 1997.