

1424 BURGLARY WITH INTENT TO COMMIT A FELONY¹ – § 943.10(1m)**Statutory Definition of the Crime**

Burglary, as defined in § 943.10(1m) of the Criminal Code of Wisconsin, is committed by one who intentionally enters a building² without the consent of the person in lawful possession and with intent to commit a felony therein.

State's Burden of Proof

Before you may find the defendant guilty of this offense, the State must prove by evidence which satisfies you beyond a reasonable doubt that the following four elements were present.

Elements of the Crime That the State Must Prove

1. The defendant intentionally entered a building.³
2. The defendant entered the building without the consent⁴ of the person in lawful possession.⁵
3. The defendant knew that the entry was without consent.⁶
4. The defendant entered the building with intent to commit (state felony)⁷, [that is, that the defendant intended to commit (state felony) at the time the defendant entered the building].⁸

[IF THE JURY IS ALSO INSTRUCTED ON THE INTENDED FELONY, IT IS SUFFICIENT TO REFER TO THAT INSTRUCTION AND NOT REPEAT IT HERE.]

[IF THE INTENDED FELONY IS NOT CHARGED, DEFINE THE CRIME, REFERRING TO THE ELEMENTS AND DEFINITIONS IN THE UNIFORM INSTRUCTION FOR THAT OFFENSE.]

When Must Intent Exist?

The intent to commit a felony must be formed before entry is made. The intent to commit (state felony) which is an essential element of burglary is no more or less than the mental purpose⁹ to commit (state felony) formed at any time before the entry, which continued to exist at the time of the entry.

Deciding About Intent and Knowledge

You cannot look into a person's mind to find intent and knowledge. Intent and knowledge must be found, if found at all, from the defendant's acts, words, and statements, if any, and from all the facts and circumstances in this case bearing upon intent and knowledge.

Jury's Decision

If you are satisfied beyond a reasonable doubt that all four elements of this offense have been proved, you should find the defendant guilty.

If you are not so satisfied, you must find the defendant not guilty.

IF ONE OF THE AGGRAVATING FACTORS SET FORTH IN § 943.10(2) IS CHARGED AND SUPPORTED BY THE EVIDENCE, ADD WIS JI-CRIMINAL 1425A, 1425B, OR 1425C.¹⁰

COMMENT

Wis JI-Criminal 1421 was originally published in 1966 and revised in 1985, 1991, 1994, 1995, 1998, 2001, 2020, 2021, and 1/2024. The 2020 revision added to footnote 2 of the comment. The 2021 revision added footnote 7 to the comment. This revision was approved by the Committee in February 2025. It corrected the referenced section in the statutory citation.

1. This instruction is drafted for burglary with the “intent to commit a felony.” If “intent to steal” is charged, see Wis JI-Criminal 1421. For burglary offenses committed “while armed” or under aggravating circumstances as prohibited by § 943.10(2), see Wis JI-Criminal 1425A, 1425B, and 1425C.

In State v. O’Neill, 121 Wis.2d 300, 359 N.W.2d 906 (1984), the Wisconsin Supreme Court held that “. . . the legislature intended to include only offenses against persons and property within the felonies which could form the basis of a burglary charge” under subsec. 943.10(1)(a). O’Neill involved a burglary charge against a campus police supervisor who allegedly conducted an illegal entry and search of an apartment. The theory of prosecution was that the illegal entry and search constituted misconduct in public office which could serve as the underlying felony for the burglary charge. The supreme court reversed the burglary conviction, holding that “misconduct in public office is not the type of felony contemplated by sec. 943.10(1).”

The text of the instruction has not been changed to accommodate the O’Neill decision because the Committee concluded that the question of whether a particular felony could form the basis for a burglary charge would be one of law for the trial court rather than one of fact for the jury.

In State v. Semrau, 2000 WI APP 54, 233 Wis.2d 508, 608 N.W.2d 376, the court applied O’Neill and concluded that bail jumping could be the intended felony upon which a burglary charge can be based.

“Felon in possession of a firearm” in violation of § 941.29 is a crime against persons or property and can be the basis for the intent to commit a felony element of burglary. State v. Steele, 2001 WI APP 34, ¶ 21, 241 Wis.2d 269, 625 N.W.2d 595.

2. The model instruction is drafted for a case involving entry into a “building.” It must be modified if entry involved any of the other places listed in § 943.10(1m)(a) through (f): any building or dwelling; an enclosed railroad car; an enclosed portion of any ship or vessel; a locked enclosed cargo portion of a truck or trailer; a motor home or other motorized type of home or a trailer home, whether or not any person is living in any such home; or a room in any of the above.

The instruction has never included a definition of “building.” The meaning of the term has been considered to be the same for burglary and arson cases. In an arson case, State v. Kuntz, 160 Wis.2d 722, 467 N.W.2d 531 (1991), the Wisconsin Supreme Court held it was error for the trial court to state that “a mobile home is a building.” The court said this created a “mandatory conclusive presumption . . . regarding an element of the arson offense.” However, the court further held that the error was harmless because it played no role in the jury’s verdict:

We conclude that no rational juror could plausibly find that the structure in question was a mobile home without also finding that the structure was a building. . . . If the jury found this structure

to be a mobile home, as that term is commonly understood, this finding would be the ‘functional equivalent’ of finding that the structure was a building.

160 Wis.2d 722, 740.

In United States of America v. Franklin, 2019 WI 64, 387 Wis.2d 259, 272, 928 N.W.2d 545, the Wisconsin Supreme Court concluded that the locational alternatives provided in Wis. Stat. § 943.01(1m)(a)-(f) are alternative factual means of committing one element of burglary. Providing context to this holding, the court referenced an example previously incorporated in State v. Pinder, 2018 WI 106, ¶60, 384 Wis. 2d 416, 919 N.W.2d 568. Although the issue in Pinder concerned the validity of a search warrant issued for the placement and use of a GPS tracking device on a motor vehicle, the court did make a ruling in which it denied an ineffective assistance of counsel claim for failure to object to the burglary jury instruction Wis. JI-Criminal 1421. Addressing this claim, the court emphasized the latitude afforded in the crafting of a burglary jury instruction so as to comport with the evidence of the case, noting that:

“[w]hile the circuit court could have used the phrase ‘a room within a building’ instead of the words ‘office’ or ‘building,’ the facts adduced would not confuse the jury as to what it was called upon to decide regardless of which of these words might be used.” Id. at 456.

The court in Franklin cited the analysis of the statutory text, the legislative history and context of the statute, along with the nature of the conduct, and the appropriateness of multiple punishments in its conclusion that Wis. Stat. § 943.01 “identifies alternative means of committing one element of the crime of burglary under § 943.01 (1m)(a)-(f).” Franklin at 273. Furthermore, the court found that the crime of burglary does not include a separate locational element, and jury unanimity on finding guilt beyond a reasonable doubt as to locational alternatives provided in § 943.01(1m)(a)-(f) is not necessary to convict. Id. 273.

If a definition of “building” is necessary, resort to a standard dictionary may be helpful. For example, Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary provides that a “building” refers to “a usually roofed and walled structure built for permanent use (as for a dwelling).”

In Clark v. State, 69 Wis. 203, 33 N.W. 436 (1887), the issue was whether an unfinished house from which tools were taken was covered by § 4409 R.S. which made it a burglary to break “and enter in the night-time any office, shop, or any other building not adjoining or occupied with any dwelling house, or any ship, steamboat, vessel, railroad freight car or passenger car, with intent to commit the crime of larceny or other felony.” The court held that the unfinished house was a “building” for purposes of burglary and defined the term as follows:

. . . an edifice or structure erected upon land, and so far completed that it may be used temporarily or permanently for the occupation or shelter of man or beast, or for the storage of tools or other personal property for safe-keeping. . . . “The well-understood meaning of the word is a structure which has a capacity to contain, and is designed for the habitation of man or animals, or the sheltering of property.”

69 Wis. 203, 206-07

A more recent case discusses “building” in connection with zoning rules prohibiting “mobile homes” but allowing “modular homes” and other buildings. The person’s home had been mobile once, but at the

site was affixed to a foundation and attached to utilities with steel undercarriage and trailer hitch removed. The court of appeals used the county's own definition of "building" and found that the home in question qualified:

. . . the county relies on the terms "building" and "mobile home" to classify structures. A building is "any structure used, designed or intended to be used for the protection, shelter or enclosure of persons, animals or property." It is clear that Hansman's structure is intended for the protection, shelter and enclosure of persons.

Hansman v. Oneida Co., 123 Wis.2d 511, 513, 366 N.W.2d 901 (Ct. App. 1985).

3. The offense of burglary is complete upon the slightest entry by the defendant into any one of the places described in § 943.10(1m)(a)-(f) without the consent of the person in lawful possession, when such entry is made with the required intent. The least entry with any part of the body is sufficient. State v. Barclay, 54 Wis.2d 651, 655n.10, 196 N.W.2d 745 (1972).

The crime of burglary is completed once "the defendant jimmied the lock and pushed against the door, pushing it inward, [and making] entry onto the premises. . . . Whether he stepped in or, as he testified, later reached in to close the door, would not matter. It is not how or why the door was closed that matters. It is the fact that it was opened by a person with intent to steal that furnishes both entry and intent, the prerequisite for the crime of burglary." Morones v. State, 61 Wis.2d 544, 548-49, 213 N.W.2d 31 (1973).

4. The defendant's entry into the place involved was without consent if the person in lawful possession did not consent in fact or if consent was given under the circumstances provided by Wis. Criminal Code § 939.22(48)(a)-(c). "Consent to enter which is obtained by the use or threat of force or by pretense of legal authority is in legal effect entry 'without consent.' The same ordinarily is true of consent obtained because the person giving the consent is mistaken as to the nature of the thing to which he consents. . . ." 1953 Legislative Council Committee Report on the Criminal Code, page 102.

Entry into a place when it is open to the public is not "without consent," see § 943.10(3). Thus, entry into a hotel lobby open to the public, although done with the intent to steal, is not burglary. Champlin v. State, 84 Wis.2d 621, 267 N.W.2d 295 (1978).

However, one who enters with consent may remain "at a time or place beyond his authority. 'Entry' in § 943.10(1m)(a), Stats., must be construed to mean not only the simple act of passing through the outer wall of a structure but also the result of such action, namely, presence within the structure." Levesque v. State, 63 Wis.2d 412, 217 N.W.2d 317 (1974). Thus, an otherwise lawful entry became unlawful when Levesque hid himself in the false ceiling of the men's room and remained there until after the restaurant was closed.

State v. Schantek, 120 Wis.2d 79, 353 N.W.2d 832 (Ct. App. 1984), involved an entry of a gas station by an employee after regular business hours. The station closed at 9:00 p.m. and Schantek entered at around 11:30 p.m., using his own key. He took money from a cash box. The court upheld the conviction for burglary, stating that the extent of consent under these circumstances must be determined on the facts of each case:

The task in most cases will be to determine the limits of such consent and the defendant's knowledge or lack of it.

. . . . We do conclude, however, that the arrangement between Schantek and his employer clearly rendered certain presence inappropriate and thus beyond the limits of the employer's consent and Schantek's knowledge. A fair reading of the evidence does not allow for the strained conclusion that Benco gave Schantek all-encompassing consent to enter the premises at all times for all purposes – including criminal adventure. Nor does the evidence remotely allow for Schantek's claim of knowledge of such all-encompassing consent. We therefore conclude under the facts of this case that the employer did not give Schantek consent to enter the premises, and Schantek had knowledge of such nonconsent.

120 Wis.2d 79, 85.

The Schantek approach was applied in State v. Karow, 154 Wis.2d 375, 453 N.W.2d 181 (Ct. App. 1990). In Karow, the defendant claimed the entry was with consent because the victim allowed him to come into the house and use the telephone. After entering, Karow and accomplices killed the victim. The court of appeals affirmed the burglary conviction, finding that the entry was “without consent” because of an “implied limitation on the scope of the invitation to enter”:

We hold that an implied limitation on the scope of the consent to enter may be recognized, and we recognize it here. The record supports an inference, not patently incredible, that the consent Brown granted to Karow, a stranger, was limited to a specific area and a single purpose. That consent can in no way be reasonably construed to extend beyond the purpose for which it was granted.

154 Wis.2d 375, 384.

5. Under § 943.10, the question is one of lawful possession and not legal title. Ordinarily, the question of who is in lawful possession, while presenting a mixed question of law and fact, can be decided by the court as a matter of law on admitted or undisputed facts.

6. Knowledge that the entry is without consent is an element of the offense of burglary because of the standard interpretation of criminal statutes required by § 939.23(3): Where the word “intentionally” is used, “the actor must have knowledge of those facts which are necessary to make his or her conduct criminal and which are set forth after the word ‘intentionally.’” The decision in Hanson v. State, 52 Wis.2d 396, 190 N.W.2d 129 (1971), is sometimes cited for the contrary position. However, Hanson involved a defendant's postconviction challenge to the validity of his guilty plea and simply held that there was an adequate factual basis for a finding that there was no consent in fact to the defendant's entry. Under such circumstances, said the court, there was no additional burden on the state to show that the defendant did not “purport to be acting under legal authority,” one of the alternatives to “no consent in fact” provided in the statutory definition of without consent, § 939.22(48). Recent decisions have reaffirmed that knowledge that entry is without consent is an essential element of burglary. See State v. Schantek, *supra*, note 4, and State v. Wilson, 160 Wis.2d 774, 467 N.W.2d 130 (Ct. App. 1991).

7. If multiple felonies are alleged, identify and define each felony. A defendant is not entitled to a unanimity instruction regarding the felonies that form the basis of their intent to enter a dwelling. In State

v. Hammer, 216 Wis. 2d 214, 576 N.W.2d 285 (Ct. App. 1997) the court of appeals considered whether, in order to support a conviction for burglary, the jury had to be unanimous as to the predicate felony that the defendant intended to commit when entering a dwelling. The circuit court had instructed the jury that three different acts (first-degree sexual assault, armed robbery, and battery causing substantial bodily harm) were felonies but declined to instruct the jury that the verdict had to be unanimous as to the predicate felony that the defendant intended to commit. Id. at 217-18. Affirming Hammer's conviction, the court concluded that the language of Wis. Stat. § 943.10(1m) "indicates that the crime is one single offense with multiple modes of commission." Id. at 220. Although there are different ways to satisfy the intent element of the crime of burglary, "the different ways do not create separate and distinct offenses." Id. at 220. Furthermore, the statute focuses on the intent to commit a felony, not any particular felony. Therefore, all the felonies are conceptually similar for the purposes of unanimity. Id. at 222.

8. The intent to commit the felony must exist at the time the defendant entered the place. It is not sufficient that the defendant formed an intent to commit the felony after entry. Such intent, however, is usually proved circumstantially by what defendant did after he entered the place.

Care must be taken to assure that the crime intended was a felony. In State v. Gilbertson, 69 Wis.2d 587, 230 N.W.2d 874 (1975), a burglary conviction was reversed because there was insufficient proof of intent to commit a felony. The underlying crime was alleged to be criminal damage to property which becomes a felony only if there is intent to reduce the property's value by the requisite felony level. The insufficiency of the evidence on this point required reversal.

A defendant's intention to endanger the safety of others through criminally reckless conduct is enough to satisfy element four's requirement that a defendant enter a building with the intent to commit a felony. See State v. Mays, 2022 WI App 24, 402 Wis.2d 162, 975 N.W.2d 649. In Mays, the Wisconsin Court of Appeals held the defendant's conviction for the crime of felony murder, with the underlying crime of armed burglary, predicated on his intent to commit second-degree recklessly endangering safety, was valid under Wisconsin law.

9. Under the Criminal Code, the phrase "with intent to" means that the defendant either has a purpose to do the thing or cause the result specified or is aware that his or her conduct is practically certain to cause that result. Subsection 939.23(4) and Wis JI-Criminal 923A and 923B.

10. Burglary, as defined in § 943.10(1m), is punished as Class F felony. The penalty increases to a Class E felony if a burglary is committed under any of the circumstances defined in subsec. (2). The Committee recommends handling these penalty-increasing factors by submitting an additional question after the basic burglary instruction is given. Instructions are provided for three of the four factors identified in subsec. (2): while armed (see Wis JI-Criminal 1425A); while unarmed, but the person arms himself or herself while in the enclosure (see Wis JI-Criminal 1425B); while in the enclosure, the person uses explosives to open a depository (there is no instruction for this alternative); and, while in the enclosure, the person commits a battery upon a person lawfully therein (see Wis JI-Criminal 1425C).