

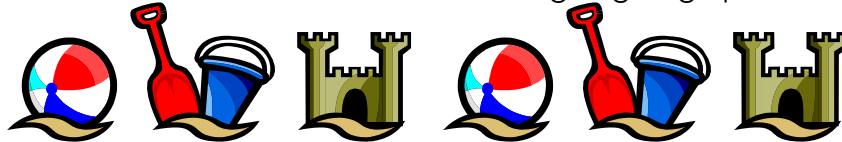


Preparing Your Home for Vacation

Awww summertime, the busiest time for traveling and vacations. We spend so much time in the preparation of the vacation...reservations, mapping, room accommodations, meals, packing, maintenance on the vehicle...but do we make the plans for a secure home while we are gone? Some of you may have your neighbors looking after your home, but **have you really prepared your home for criminals scouting for that "vacant look"?**

Thieves cruise neighborhoods, especially during vacation time, looking for easy targets and obvious signs that people are away. Before you drive out for your relaxing vacation, you might want to take a walk around the perimeter of your property and objectively look at its vulnerability. Try looking at it through the eyes of a burglar, and make a checklist of things to change or take care of before you leave.

The Home & Safety Council has some great tips for you to put on your checklist of "To-Do-Before-Vacation" items. Some may say that if a burglar wants to get in, they will find a way. I say, why give them easy access...make it as difficult as possible...it could mean the difference of the burglar giving up or being caught!



Turn up the Lights



- Put bright lights over porches and walkways in the front and back. If you have security lights, make sure they and all others are in working order.

Lock it Up



- All doors to the outside should have working locks.
- Garage and shed doors need working locks too.



- All windows should have working locks.



- Keep all doors to the outside, sliding doors, and windows locked.

Be Able to Get Out



- Make sure everyone can open all locks from inside your home.



- Don't have deadbolt locks that lock with an inside key. You need to get out fast if a fire starts. A missing key could trap you inside.



- Replace inside-key locks with deadbolt locks that have a "thumb turn" instead of an indoor key.
- Make sure everyone in your family can reach the "thumb turn" latch.



- Have window locks that open from inside. Do not nail windows shut. Make sure they open easily. Those windows we don't generally use often can get stuck from lack of use.



- If you have security bars on doors and windows, have a "quick-release" latch. This makes it easy to get outside in an emergency.
- Make sure everyone in your family knows how to use the latch.

Don't Help Intruders



- Keep bushes and shrubs trimmed under windows so burglars can't hide.



- Keep ladders stored in a locked shed or garage so they cannot be used to climb into your home.



- Keep shades or curtains closed over garage and shed windows.
- Keep shades or curtains closed over your home windows after dark, especially if you have your lights on timers.



- Don't leave toys, tools and equipment in the yard.

When You're Gone a Few Days



- Make your home look as if someone is there.



- Do yard work before you leave.



- Have a family member or friend bring in your mail and newspaper while you are gone.

Additional tips:

- ✓ Ask a neighbor to take in the newspaper, mail and any other deliveries. Make sure your neighbor has a way of contacting you in case of an emergency. I like to give them our cell numbers, and let them know where we will be staying.
- ✓ If you are going to be gone a long period of time, you might arrange for someone to mow your yard.
- ✓ If you have any standing monthly deliveries, and do not have a neighbor who will be able to collect your newspapers or mail you should cancel them until you return.

- ✓ Ask a family member, friend or neighbor if they have a car they could park in your driveway to give the appearance of someone being home.
- ✓ Use timers to activate inside lighting, radios or TVs.
- ✓ Set your telephone answering machine so that the rings don't exceed three rings. A telephone ringing for a long time many times through the day and night is an indicator that someone is not home. You may also choose to turn the ringer down, or disconnect the phone.
- ✓ Make sure your spare house keys aren't available to burglars; strategically hidden somewhere outside. Give your spare key to a trusted neighbor.

Whatever you choose to do and where ever you choose to vacation, remember this: a vacation should be just that, vacate from worries and troubles and enjoy a little bit of life and living. Do what you can for home safety and enjoy your much-deserved vacation!



Resources:

Home Safety Council
www.homesafetycouncil.org

Graphics:

Home Safety Council
Ben-lang.com

