



## Safety Tips for Preparing Your Home for a Vacation

Burglary rates are their highest during the month of August, while the other summer months are also prone to an exception number of break-ins. Along with factors such as length of day and the weather, the reason that break-ins are common in the summer is due to the high number of homes left vacant during the vacation season. Simply keeping doors locked is no longer enough to prevent burglary during vacation. Other precautions must be taken in order to protect a home.

An empty home may also fall into trouble if no one there is to monitor whether or not systems break. Just as a vacant home quickly loses value due to deterioration, a long vacation may have the same affect. In order to protect your house while away, there are a few important steps that you may take. The following list informs the homeowner of how to protect the home from intruders and any other problems that may arise.



### 1. **Make the House Look Lived In**

Giving the appearance that residents are still home will lower the chances of burglary. There are a variety of measures that one can take to make a house look lived in.

- Set lights on a timer that matches your typical routine. Consider putting the television or a radio on a timer as well so that it sounds like someone is home.
- Contact the post office and ask them to hold all mail or ask a neighbor to collect mail and newspapers so that there is no visible buildup.

- Hire someone to mow the lawn if the vacation will last a week or longer. In the winter, hire someone to shovel the walkway and the driveway in the case of a snowstorm.
- Silence landlines, as a constantly ringing phone will notify intruders that no one is home to answer. Do not change the answering machine message to inform callers that the house will be vacant for an extended period of time.
- Consider asking a close neighbor to leave their car in the driveway if yours will not be left at home. Park the car directly in front of the garage door to make it more difficult for anyone to pry it open. Disable any electronic functions on garage doors.

## 2. Inform the Neighbors

Employ neighbors to be scouts during the time that you are away. They can keep an eye out the home and watch out for any suspicious activity, as well as assist in any of the previous security tactics such as collecting mail. Give them your exact itinerary so that they know when to be on high alert and how to contact you in case of emergency.

Leave a set of house keys with a single trusted neighbor. Be sure not to leave any spare keys beneath welcome mats or in any other “hidden” spots, as these are prime ways of allowing intruders inside. Instead, leave the key in the possession of the individual taking care of the home while you are away.



If a friend will be visiting the house to feed pets, water plants, etc., inform the neighbors so they are not to worry. Describe what the person looks like and the type of car that they drive.

If you do not have any direct neighbors, inform the local police station of vacation plans. They may even perform routine checks on the house while you are away.

## 3. Use Your Locks

It may seem silly to even mention, but in the chaos of packing, it can be easy to forget to lock the front door. Stick a note on the dashboard of your vehicle as a reminder to double check all locks. Before you can drive away, you will be forced to remember to do one last check before leaving.

All windows should be locked from the inside, even those on the second story. If the concern is leaving pets in the summer heat, leave the air conditioning on at a low setting rather than keeping windows open. Upon return, the house will already be cool, rather than baking in the summer sun and holding in all of that heat. Be sure that the air conditioning unit has been fully secured so thieves cannot remove it and enter through the window. If any of the windows have broken locks, now may be the perfect time to have them repaired.

#### **4. Keep It on the Down Low**

Do not post about vacation plans on social media websites unless all privacy settings are set to broadcast to friends only.



(Even then, Facebook security can be tricky, so it may be best to avoid posting about the trip altogether.)

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#### **5. Protect the Pipes**

In the summer, the home's main water source should be shut off in order to prevent flooding. Leaving a dripping faucet on will allow the pipes to drain and relieve pressure. If a neighbor or a friend will be visiting the home, ask them to also check the basement for flooding.

In the winter it is important to take precautions so that the pipes do not freeze. Do not shut off the heat. Leave the thermostat on at least 55 degrees to prevent freezing. If gas is not necessary for heating the home, you should turn off the gas going into the home. Make a list of what has been shut off so that you remember what to turn back on upon your return.

#### **6. Unplug**

Any small appliances that are not needed (such as coffee makers, toaster ovens, stereos, etc.) should be unplugged in order to avoid the possibility of electrical fire. Additionally, these appliances use up energy even when they are turned off, so it will help lower the electric bill to keep them unplugged.



## **7. Record Serial Numbers**

Write down the serial numbers of any expensive electronics in the incident that the home is broken into. Take photographs of all valuables to prove that they were in the home at the time of the incident. All valuables should be hidden away from plain sight as not to tempt passers-by.

These above tips should assist in keeping a home safe and secure during a vacation. Unfortunately, despite all preventative measures, one cannot always control what happens while you are away. At least if something does happen, you can have

confidence in the fact that homeowners insurance will protect you from any harm done to your home or your valuables.

If you would like to learn more about obtaining homeowners insurance that fits your specific needs, please [contact](#) one of our agents. We would be happy to speak with you about both the standard and special types of homeowners insurance that we offer.

TJ Woods Insurance Agency is located at 20 Park Avenue in Worcester, MA. We offer personal and commercial insurance coverage to Massachusetts residents and businesses as well as financial services throughout New England.

