

Protecting Your Home While on Vacation



Vacation time is here. Many will go away for a week or more and leave their homes unattended. This makes homes a target for criminals. While taking measures to prevent damage from power surges and broken pipes, it's also important to take steps to avoid damage from someone breaking in and stealing your possessions:

- **Lock it up to stop break-ins. Lock all windows and doors.** Almost half of all break-ins happen without the use of force. If you have a deadbolt lock, use it. Secure sliding glass doors with strong dowels, two-by-fours, or steel bars placed in the lower grooves. Don't forget to lock your garage as well.
- **Ask friends or neighbors to keep an eye on your house.** Ask them to take in newspapers and mail, or have those deliveries suspended while you are away. Arrange for your lawn to be mowed. Give your neighbor or friend a key to your home in case of an emergency that requires someone to go inside. Give them your itinerary and contact information. Show them the location of the water main shut-off in case a water pipe bursts.
- **Avoid posting vacation plans on social networking sites.** Complete strangers have access to this information on the internet.
- **Notify police that you will be away.** Ask them to drive by your house on their patrols to make sure everything looks secure.
- **Leave curtains exactly as you keep them when you're home.** Changes in your regular routine may alert thieves to your being away. Keep expensive items out of sight.
- **Don't leave lights on throughout your vacation.** Lights blazing throughout the day and night may look odd, especially if that is not your usual practice. Instead, purchase a timer that will turn lights on and off automatically on a programmed schedule.
- **Stop mail and newspaper deliveries.** Papers piled up on your property is a sign to criminals that you are out of town.
- **Unplug small appliances and electronics.** This protects them from power surges and saves money as well.
- **Remove your spare key.** Criminals know usual hiding places and will check all of them to find a hidden key.
- **Trim shrubs and trees.** These are hiding places for criminals, especially around windows and doors.
- **Remove items from your yard.** Bicycles, lawnmowers, scooters, and tricycles are easy targets for someone to walk away with.