

Protect Your Home While Traveling

By JOE SZYNKOWSKI | Green Shoot Media

Vacation is a time to relax and see some of the beautiful sights our country offers. Is your home safe while you are on an extended stay? Who will protect your belongings while you're gone?

A good way to keep your home safe while you are away is to find someone you trust to live there until you return. If you know someone you trust who can do this, it is a huge advantage.

If you are unable to find a suitable house sitter, there are still a few options. An obvious threat we fear while we are away is being vulnerable to a break-in. While that may be your No. 1 concern, there are other factors to consider. Take steps to protect your home so you can unwind and recharge on this vacation.

MAKE IT LOOK LIKE SOMEONE IS HOME

It can be beneficial to have your yard work done for you during your trip. Hire someone to mow your lawn, trim hedges or even plant an attractive flower bed you can come home to. Giving the impression that outdoor maintenance is being completed is a good way to make your home look occupied.

Be sure to have your mail and newspaper delivery services held. A pile of papers on your doorstep is a clear sign that you haven't been home for several days. Potential burglars also might choose to check mailboxes for clues that the house is vacant.

Even if you are unable to find a part-time resident to stay at your home, ask friends or family members to keep an eye on your property. Ask someone to drive by on their way to and from work

to make sure everything looks secure.

SECURITY FEATURES

Consider installing a security system. Some models can communicate with a security center, which will call law enforcement at any sign of trouble. You also will be notified of any activity.

If a security system is not in your budget, you can find comfort in exterior lights. Keeping the perimeter of your home well lit will dissuade wrong-doers. You can install lights on timers or even ones that are motion activated for an affordable price. Consider interior light timers and program them to come on when the sun goes down.

Adding deadlocks to your exterior doors will reinforce their strength. While enough force will ultimately cause the door to open, most thieves won't spend a lot of time on a secure door, due to the fear of being seen.

UTILITY MANAGEMENT

Before you leave, try to unplug electronic devices, as they continue to draw power even when they are not operating.

Consider using a programmable thermostat to maintain the temperature throughout the day. Turning off the heating or air conditioning in your home completely can be dangerous to a home over long periods, especially when it is extremely hot or cold outside.

Some "smart thermostats" can even be controlled by a device such as a smartphone. They can be pricey, but being able to control your home's temperature wherever you are might give you peace of mind.



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REAL ESTATE 101



Spot a Security Scam

The Federal Trade Commission warns that some home security services are scams. In particular, be on the lookout for door-to-door sales people using high-pressure sales tactics. The FTC urges consumers to check agents' identification, check references and get several written estimates before choosing a home security provider. Read more tips from the FTC at <http://bit.ly/1gWrcZJ>.

HOMESWISE GLOSSARY

Third-party origination: A process by which a lender uses another party to completely or partially originate, process, underwrite, close, fund or package a mortgage loan.

SOURCE: Federal Trade Commission

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