

## Your Vacation Checklist: Make Sure Your Home is Secure While You're Gone

Your bags are packed and you're about to head out the door for a week-long vacation, but you can't help but feel like you're forgetting something. Preparing your home for your departure is just as important as remembering to pack your toothbrush.

Just like you create a packing list, homeowners should have a home safety checklist they follow before leaving their home for any extended period of time. According to the FBI, a burglary occurs every 16.4 seconds in the United States resulting in approximately \$4.5 billion in property loss.

Below is a checklist to keep your mind at ease and avoid that sinking feeling in your stomach when you're not sure you remembered to lock the deadbolt:

- **Lock doors and windows.** There's nothing worse than wondering if you remembered to lock the door or close that first floor window. Unlocked doors and windows are a criminal's main point of entry. This is also a good time to replace any broken locks and make sure all of your locks are working properly.
- **Make the residence look occupied.** Try to make things look as normal as possible while you're gone. Keep your blinds in their normal position, leave the air conditioning/heat on while you're gone, hire someone to mow your lawn, ask neighbors to park in your driveway, place a hold on mail/deliveries, etc.
- **Use timers.** Placing lights, TVs, radios, etc. to turn on and off at normal times is an easy way to make it seem like someone is home. Nothing says you're away like a dark house multiple nights in a row.
- **Beware of social media.** Be careful of what you post and share online. By sharing your vacation pictures and travel plans online, you're advertising that your residence is unattended. If you have a landline, leave a normal message on your answering machine, and don't share that you're out of town.
- **Tell select people that you'll be away.** Ask neighbors to keep an eye on your property, and leave a phone number where you can be reached in case of emergency. Notify police if you'll be gone longer than a week and consider asking a friend or neighbor to check in on things while you're away.
- **Remove your spare key.** If you keep a spare key hidden outside of your residence, either take it with you or leave it with a neighbor. A criminal will often check for a spare key if they're trying to enter your home.

