

ROADMAP for Vacation Prep

Each year millions of homeowners pack up the family and head off on epic road trips. Others fly across the country to visit vacation spots or loved ones.

Whenever you choose to get away, your pre-trip preparations should include home security measures, so you won't leave the family's most expensive possession – your home – vulnerable to burglars. A few simple steps can mitigate the risk of a break-in – and a home insurance claim.



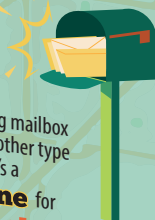
Don't Let Your Stuff PILE UP

or arrange for a neighbor to take the cans in and out on trash pick-up days.

A buildup of papers on the front porch or a mailbox stuffed to the brim can be almost as bad as putting up a billboard telling thieves that no one is home.



Have newspapers stopped days before departure to help ensure that unwanted papers will not remain on the porch. Better still, the newspaper bill will be credited or the subscription can be donated to a local school – or it can be extended to reflect the undelivered issues.



An overflowing mailbox can attract another type of criminal – it's a

gold mine for **identity thieves.**

When you're leaving for more than a couple of days, arrange with the post office to stop mail delivery until you get back. The post office has made it easy – they can hold mail from **3 TO 30 DAYS**, and it's completely free! Sign up for the service online at usps.com.

Don't forget about those fliers that salesmen leave on your doorknob, or those periodic yellow page book deliveries. Ask neighbors to walk by your house occasionally to check doors & retrieve any hang tags or unexpected packages.



Don't ALERT Thieves

Don't discuss your travel plans in public places or online – you don't have to be paranoid, but exercise a healthy amount of common sense.



i.e.
Your blog probably isn't the best place to announce that you'll be away from home for a month.

Oh, and don't leave a portable GPS in your car when you use long-term parking at the airport. It'll alert thieves that you're not home and give them a convenient map to your unoccupied house.



Before you leave, disable or turn down the ringers on your phones so unanswered rings won't be heard from outside.

LOCK Stuff

This seems obvious, but hey, it's easy to forget. Locking your home makes it **less attractive** to opportunistic burglars.



Keep valuables such as jewelry and important papers in a **SECURE LOCATION** away from windows.



Don't overlook locking pet doors and the door between the garage and house.

Remove valuables from cars parked outside.

Turn off your garage door to keep thieves from opening it with a universal remote.

If it takes more than **4 OR 5** minutes to break into a home, the burglar will likely leave.



Do everything possible to make your house a **lousy target** for thieves.

Burglars slipping in through unlocked windows or doors account for nearly **1/3** of break-ins for single-family homes.

REMEMBER
the best locks in the world can't protect you if you don't use them.



Sound the ALARM

A good home alarm can keep burglars out of your



(but an actual alarm system might earn you a discount on your home insurance)

As with locks, an alarm is only good if you set it **BEFORE YOU LEAVE.**

Consider alerting the police department about your vacation. Many law enforcement agencies have a **VACATION CHECK** program. Officers or volunteers will make random stops at your home and do a cursory check.



YARD Maintenance

ARRANGE TO HAVE YOUR LAWN MOWED WHILE YOU'RE AWAY.

GOOD EXTERIOR LIGHTING CAN MAKE BURGLARS NERVOUS...

it should be focused on the entry ways into your home.



Most homeowners know that **well-trimmed hedges and bushes** deny burglars a key place to hide before breaking in. But it's also important for home security to **prune low-hanging branches**, which can give thieves access to the second floor.



Make your home look LIVED-IN

Leave your blinds and shades in their **NORMAL POSITIONS**. Burglars are more attracted to homes with windows that remain covered day and night.



Lights left on 24/7 is a clear sign that **NO ONE IS HOME**...



It's almost just as easy for a thief to tell when lights are set on a non-variable timer. **VARIABLE TIMERS** can give the appearance that someone is home.

You may have a tidy relative who will temporarily move in and water the plants, feed the pets, and pick up the newspapers. If not, there are services you can use for house-sitting and pet-sitting while you're away. This can be a pricey option, but it's a solution that covers all the bases. At the very least, have someone check on your home at least once a day; this can also prevent a burst pipe or flooded basement from going unnoticed. **The best way to make sure your house is safe while you're gone is to have someone you trust STILL LIVING IN IT.**



Contact Info

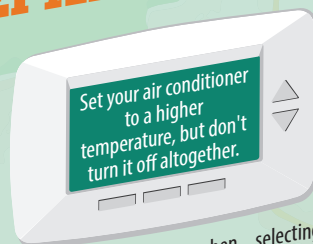
Take along phone numbers of friends and neighbors, including their work numbers for emergency contacts.

Leave a phone number where you can be reached and a travel itinerary with the neighbor who's watching your house.

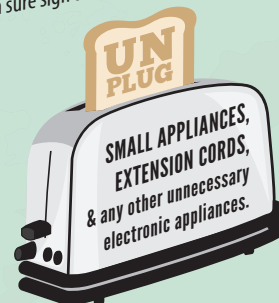
Home PREPARATION

Shut off water lines to washing machines to avoid flooding problems. Damage from a burst washing machine water hose can result in **thousands of dollars** of damage.

Don't forget to unplug expensive electronics, computers and other devices that might be damaged by a power surge. Not only will it save a little on energy costs, but it will also help prevent an electrical fire.



Use your discretion when selecting temperature settings, but keep in mind that a silent compressor on a blistering day is a sure sign that a house is unoccupied.



SMALL APPLIANCES, EXTENSION CORDS, & any other unnecessary electronic appliances.

KEY Smart

Locking your doors is important, but as many as **50 PERCENT** of burglaries **INVOLVE THE USE OF A KEY.**



Keep track of all the keys to your home and make sure they're in safe hands.

DON'T HIDE KEYS OUTSIDE
You may be clever, but burglars know the best hiding places better than you do.

psst There's probably a **KEY** hidden under this random rock.

Plan for Your POOCH

Are you planning to board your pets while gone or perhaps hire a pet sitter? Make arrangements or reservations at least **TWO WEEKS** in advance to secure a spot. Most boarders require proof of up-to-date vaccinations and shots. Ask them what documentation they require when making your reservations.



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Sources
Insurance Information Institute (iii.org)
National Crime Prevention Council (ncpc.org)
United States Postal Service (usps.com)

Huffington Post (huffingtonpost.com)
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