

Going Away? Secure your home with a Neighborhood Watch

When you're away, home security depends on a helping hand (and extra eyes).

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It's much easier to relax on vacation if you know trusted neighbors are watching your home. Before you leave town, arrange for them to do the following – and don't forget to return the favor when they take a trip.

- Collect any deliveries. Even if you have mail and newspaper delivery stopped, neighbors should watch for packages.
- Park their car in your driveway occasionally (or move your car) so it looks like someone is home.
- Set out your garbage can for normal pickup and put it away afterward.
- Maintain your lawn.
- Keep an eye on your property – and call the police if they see something suspicious.
- Act for you in an emergency. (Leave them a spare key, instructions and codes for your security system and information about how to reach you.)

If You Can't Ask a Neighbor for Help

To ease your mind, take the following actions:

- Keep your travel plans quiet.
- If you haven't already, install a security system and motion-detector lights.
- Ask a friend or relative to stay at your home while you're gone. If that's not possible, ask someone to stop by your house to check on it once or twice a day.
- Notify local police about your trip. Some communities offer home-watch programs.

Before You Go

Complete this checklist to secure your home when you head out of town.

- Arrange to have mail and packages picked up or held.
- Stop newspaper delivery.
- Move cash, jewelry and other valuables to a safe-deposit box.
- Set lights, a radio and a TV on automatic timers to give the illusion that you're home. (Use several for the most realistic effect.)
- Lower the sound of your telephone ringer and answering machine.
- Leave your regular greeting on your voice mail or answering machine. Don't announce that you are away.
- Turn off water to the washing machine so hoses won't burst and flood the house.
- Lock all doors. Long dead bolts are best. Don't forget the side garage door and rear doors. Sliding doors should be equipped with special locks (or, in a pinch, place a broom handle or similar item in the door channel).

- Lock all windows.
- Leave curtains, shades and blinds in their normal position.
- Activate your security system.

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