

Vacation Safety

Leaving soon for a vacation? Don't advertise your empty house as a welcome target for thieves; instead, take steps to enhance safety and security. Prepare before leaving home, and take note of the following security tips. They require extra time and effort, but will provide you with peace of mind while you are away.

- Use lighting liberally on the interior and exterior of your home. Purchase several light timers, and program lights for different rooms at varying times.
- Do yard work before leaving. Prune shrubs away from windows and doors and remove any tree limbs that might inadvertently provide access to a second-story.
- Never hide house keys in a mailbox, planter or under a mat.
- Avoid leaving messages on your phone answering machine that alerts callers to your absence.
- Ensure that all door and window locks are operable.
- Fit locksets with dead latches (small brass elements that ride on the face of the latch) to prevent jimmying with plastic strips or credit cards.
- Fit all entry doors - back door, garage door and patio door - with extra-security deadbolts with full 1-inch bolts, preferably all-steel and brass construction with a cylinder guard.
- For doors with glass panels within three feet of the lock, use a double-cylinder deadbolt. These require key operation from both sides.
- If absent for multiple days, arrange for someone to maintain the yard work.
- Consider asking a neighbor to park their car in your driveway.
- Arrange to have newspaper and mail delivery suspended or collected.
- Before leaving, double-check that all doors and windows are locked and light timers are set. Provide relatives or friend with contact information in case of an emergency.