



DON'T LET CRIME SPOIL YOUR VACATION BY DON MOORE

Last year, Americans lost over \$3.2 billion to residential burglaries, mostly during the peak of vacation time—summer.

In fact, July and August are the peak months for most crimes, including burglaries. While most of us are enjoying our vacations, burglars are casing our homes, looking for signs that we're away.

A simple precaution against burglary is to install good locks on all doors and windows, and USE THEM before you leave. If you are the customer of a private security company patrol service, notify them that you are leaving. In addition to collecting your mail while you are away, many will conduct perimeter checks of your house at least once a day to make sure all doors and windows are secure.

Make sure that your house appears lived in while you are on vacation. Ask a neighbor to collect your mail and newspapers, or have the post office and newspaper circulation stop delivery. Also have your lawn mowed while you are gone and have a neighbor or gardener put out your trashcans on trash day. Burglars look for any disruption in your routine for an indication that no one is home.

It is also a good idea to have electrical timers hooked up to lights, a radio or television, and the air conditioner. If a burglar spots a house on a hot night in summer with windows up and no air conditioner running, it's a sure sign the house is empty.

To give an appearance that someone is home, ask a trusted friend or neighbor to go into the house occasionally to adjust which window shades are open. If you have an answering machine, simply state on your message that you are unable to come to the phone. Do not say that you are out of town. If you do not have an answering machine, unplug the phone or muffle them with a pillow so a potential burglar won't be clued to excessive ringing.

If you have a garage or tool shed, make sure they are securely locked. Often, burglars will use your own tools to break into the house, making them less conspicuous and more difficult to prosecute.

Remember, burglars do not look for homes with the best merchandise; they look for the homes that are the easiest targets. By applying these basic precautions, you will greatly decrease the likelihood of your home being burglarized while you are away. Vacations should be a time for fun and relaxation. Don't let yours be spoiled by crime.

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