



## How homeowners can deter break-ins while away on vacation

If you are getting ready for your vacation, you may be asking what you can do to deter home break-ins while on vacation this summer. The greatest numbers of home burglaries occur during July and August, according to insurance industry statistics. Homes are burglarized about every 15 seconds and a homeowner loses an average of nearly \$2,000 in possessions and damages, according to the Department of Justice.

More than 2.1 million burglaries take place annually, with more than 65 percent being home break-ins, according to a national insurance industry group. "Residential homeowners and renters can deter the opportunistic home burglar by taking security precautions during summer months when they travel on vacation," according to David Womble, homeowner claims group manager for AAA New Mexico.

### AAA New Mexico's top tips to help prevent home burglaries are:

- Never announce your vacation plans on Facebook, MySpace or Twitter.
- Lock all doors and windows before you leave. Use deadbolts, dowels, locking pins in sliding glass doors and windows to keep them from being pried open. Slowing down a would-be burglar will likely make them seek another home that's easier to break into.
- If possible, **install a monitored alarm system** in your home. You may be eligible for a discount on your insurance premium after the system is installed. Make sure your home insurance is up to date and provides adequate coverage if you own luxury goods, expensive jewelry and electronics. Check to see if you need an additional rider or floater insurance policy for those items from AAA or other insurance representatives.
- Keep the exterior of your home and yard well lit with low-wattage outdoor lighting.
- Close and lock the garage door. Side garage doors should be solid, without any glass and equipped with a strong deadbolt.
- Don't advertise that you're going out of town. Stop all deliveries, mail and newspapers, or ask a trustworthy neighbor or friend to pick them up for you. Don't let mail, including bank statements and credit card offers, sit in the mailbox to advertise you're away and tempt a thief to steal your identity.
- Use automatic timers with inside lamps and a radio. Set them to come on at random times.
- Remove spare keys from outside your home, especially near the front door or under a welcome mat.
- Trim bushes in front of entrances, including windows. This eliminates a burglar's ability to hide while breaking in.
- Keep some blinds up and curtains open to keep up normal appearances. Put away personal documents, and place critical documents in a safety deposit box or leave them with a relative. Hide expensive jewelry or place in a safety deposit box at your bank.
- If you've just moved into your home, change the front door lock.
- Many thefts are perpetrated by individuals who may have access to your home. If possible, conduct background checks and closely monitor those who may be working inside your residence.

Neighborhood Watch programs are great deterrents. If your neighborhood doesn't have one, volunteer to start one with your local police department before leaving town or ask a trustworthy neighbor to keep an eye on your home while you're away.

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