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Keeping Your Home Safe While You're On Vacation

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Keeping Your Home Safe While You're On Vacation

While summer vacation is a time to kick back, relax and enjoy the sun, your time away from home can leave the place vulnerable. By taking a few preventive measures to keep your house safe while you're gone, you can make the most of your vacation and give yourself a little peace of mind. Here are some tips on how to stay safe while you're away this summer.

Don't Tip Off Thieves

While most people will take some basic preventative measures to avoid tipping off thieves — like having a neighbor come over to pick up the mail, look in every now and then and, maybe, mow the lawn — this often isn't enough to stop a determined crook. Here are some extra measures you can take to make sure criminals don't break in while you're away.

Keep it Secure: Many people leave their garage door openers in the cars, and thieves know this. With a swift smash of a window, that parked car in your driveway has given them access to your garage. Make sure you hide your garage door opener — good advice even when you're not on vacation. While you're at it, make sure to remove any extra keys you have stashed away. You might think your hiding spot behind the drainpipe is ingenious, but a clever thief often knows right where to look.

Use Technology to Your Advantage: While you can get a friend to occasionally check in, you can put your smartphone or tablet to work to give you realtime surveillance around the clock. The Dropcam is a wifi-enabled security camera that allows you to stream video directly to Android and Apple devices and can even send you alerts to your phone when something is wrong.

For a fuller security system, you can also check out Lowe's Iris smart home system, which includes video surveillance, motion sensors, door and window sensors, and a door lock, all of which you can control and monitor from your phone.

If you already have a monitored home security system, check with your provider to see if they have an app that allows you to check in on your home. Many, like ADT's Pulse will allow you to extend your home security system's features, giving you access to check in while you're on the go.

Preventing Disaster

Thieves aren't the only thing you have to worry about while you're away. Disaster can also strike, leaving your house damaged or destroyed. However, you can take steps to mitigate potential problems.

Check Your Water Heater: A water heater can go at any time, but if it occurs while you're away for a few weeks, clean up and repairs can cost tens of thousands of dollars. Unfortunately, there's no surefire way to know when a water heater might start leaking, but you can check for some common signs that disaster is imminent. Big leaks often start as small leaks, which many people don't notice until it's too late. Look for any drops of water, as well as rust or corrosion around the edges of the tank.

Unplug Before Your Leave: Black outs and brown outs can be common in the summer months, especially when a sudden heat wave puts a lot of pressure on the local power grid. When the power comes back on, the resulting surge can harm delicate electronics. So before you head out on your big vacation, make sure to unplug your gadgets.

Turn Down Your Air Conditioner (But Don't Turn It Off): To save money, many people might be tempted to turn the air conditioner off entirely while they are out of town. The problem is that in humid summer weather, your hot, sealed-up home can quickly become a breeding ground for mold — not a fun thing to return to after your vacation. By setting the thermostat at 85 degrees, you'll keep the heat and humidity in check without costing you a fortune to run it while you're away.

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