

Home safe home

Keep burglars away while you're on vacation

While you're out of town enjoying your vacation this summer, make sure that you don't give burglars an opportunity to ransack your home.

Vacations provide burglars with plenty of time to enter your home, remove items and search for hidden valuables. The FBI reports that almost 2 million homeowners are burglarized each year, with an average loss of nearly \$1,200.

Burglars are successful because they strike quickly and avoid risks. Law enforcement officials agree that would-be intruders shy away from unpredictable situations — when they can't really be sure no one is home.

But some simple measures that create an illusion of normal activity can help safeguard your residence in your absence. One of the most effective is to use timers throughout your home to create the impression of movement at different times of the day and night.

"The best approach is to combine several timers so that they vary the times lamps and appliances operate,"

said Mike Einstein of Intermatic Inc., a manufacturer of home security and safety lighting products. "For example, you can program a television or radio to turn on in the living room or den during the afternoon. After dark, lamp timers can be set to imitate someone moving from room to room over the course of an evening."

In using timers, it's a good idea to avoid an obvious timer-controlled look. Einstein said that timers with a random pattern that turns lamps or appliances on and off at slightly different times each day are now available. For even easier programming, there's also a plug-in timer with a dial resembling a clock. To help secure your home during vacations, consider using a variable timer that enables you to schedule different on/off times for each day of the week.

Various electronic timers that offer outstanding accuracy can be obtained at local hardware stores and home centers. Also available are screw-in and plug-in photo controls, which can be

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used to regulate porch lights, coach lights and floodlights.

The following vacation checklist will reduce your chances of being burglarized while you're enjoying some time off:

■ Ask your police department to check your home when you're away.

■ Secure all doors, windows, pet entrances and garage doors.

■ Stop mail and newspaper deliveries, or have a trusted neighbor collect them. Also ask your neighbor to remove any advertising flyers.

■ Arrange to have your lawn and bushes trimmed if you'll be away for an extended period of time.

■ Keep some shades and blinds up and curtains open to maintain a normal appearance.

■ Remove messages from your telephone answering machine regularly so that the "beep" is always short. And don't indicate on your message that you are on vacation.

"There's nothing more unpleasant than returning from vacation and finding your home burglarized. But if you make it look like you've never left, burglars are likely to stay away, too."

For a home security booklet, send a self-addressed, stamped, business-size envelope and \$1 to: Intermatic Inc., Intermatic Plaza, Spring Grove, Ill. 60081. Request Form 156PP8373.

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