

Keep prowlers away from your home with these vacation tips

Common sense may tell us to lock our doors and windows before we leave home. Unfortunately, however, more than one million burglaries in 1998 were committed without forced entry because people forgot this simple safety measure.

What else invites burglars into our home? Some unintentional welcoming signs include overgrown shrubs covering a home's entry points, a message on the answering machine offering the date of your return, a mailbox overfilled with mail and a driveway full of snow with no tire marks. Referred to as a "target of opportunity" by the police, a home that appears unoccupied offers a burglar an open invitation to enter.

"It's easy for people to forget the simple, common sense steps to safeguard their residence. The key is to create an illusion of everyday activity," says Tony DeMarco, spokesperson for the Burglary Prevention, a nationwide non-profit organization dedicated to educating the public

on crime prevention measures. "In 1998, a burglary occurred in a house, condominium and apartment every 11 seconds. That translates to more than 2.3 million burglaries a year," says DeMarco, a 20-year veteran of the Chicago Police Department and expert on crime prevention.

"People need to know that burglars can be prevented by paying attention to the simplest security measures combined with a greater alertness of your surroundings."

10 Simple Steps to Safeguard Your Home

DeMarco and the Burglary Prevention Council recommend the following 10 steps for safeguarding your home against intruders.

- Close and lock all doors when leaving, even for short periods. This includes garage or connecting doors. "Burglars want easy jobs," says DeMarco. "That's why they scan homes for the weakest point of entry."
- Use automatic timers. Timers can be set to turn on

and off lights, radios and televisions at varying times of the day. Also, use them when on vacation or away for an extended period of time to give burglars the impression that someone is home.

■ Illuminate the yard area. "Darkness is a burglar's best friend. Doorways and the rear of the house should be lit with cost-effective, low voltage lighting to minimize dark spaces."

■ Lock up ladders, tools and lawn furniture. "These items could be used by burglars to gain entry into the home."

■ Trim your trees and shrubs surrounding the home. "If overgrown, these areas serve as perfect hiding places for burglars and allow them to work undetected."

■ Start a neighborhood watch program. "Local police departments can provide materials and assist in getting a program started. In the meantime, it helps to build a good relationship with your neighbors, so each one can watch the other's home while

they're away."

■ Use window and door alarms. "Alarms vary in their degree of sophistication, ranging from a door alarm that makes noise to silent alarms patched into your local police station. Burglars will typically leave when any alarm is sounded. In addition, an inexpensive alarm system also creates valuable space of mind."

■ Take a complete inventory of your valuables and place valuable jewelry and documents in a safety deposit box. "Videotape or take photos of all valuable possessions. These should also be marked with an engraving pen to help police trace and recover them if stolen."

■ Don't allow strangers into the home to use the phone and never leave service technicians or repairmen alone in the house. "These individuals might be casing homes in the neighborhood for possible burglary targets."

■ Never place keys under the

doormat, flower pot or window ledge. "Burglars study the daily habits and routines of people. Experience has taught them to check these places first when casing a house."

Tips and approaches to home security are described in detail in the Burglary Prevention Council's 12-page booklet, "Safe & Secure." The booklet also provides information on evaluating your home's current safety measures, assessing entry points,

what attracts and discourages burglars and how to implement a cost-effective security program.

The free booklet can be obtained by sending a self-addressed, stamped envelope plus \$1 for postage and handling to the Burglary Prevention Council, 221 North LaSalle Street, Suite 3500, Chicago, IL 60601-1620, or downloaded from the BPC Web site at www.burglaryprevention.org.

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DNR kids' summer programs focus on nature

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources offers some free nature programs for kids this summer.

At Proud Lake Recreation Area, 3500 Wixom Road in Commerce Township, in the annex parking lot, here's what's on the agenda:

On Tuesday, June 20, at 10 a.m. "Spiders." Many people fear spiders, even though they are very beneficial. Meet at Proud Lake annex lot to learn about spiders and why they're important.

Other Tuesday programs at 10 a.m. include "Animal Homes" on June 27. Animals can live just about anywhere. Why do they live where they do and how do they build their homes? "Frogs and Toads" is set for July 11. Can you really get worms from toads? Where do frogs live during the wintertime? Learn about the very unique lifestyles of these creatures.

At the Highland Recreation Area, 5200 M-59 in White Lake, these are some of the Thursday 10 a.m. programs scheduled for

the Goose Meadow parking lot.

"Beginning Birding": Highland Recreation Area is a great place to see birds. Be on the lookout for both woodland and water birds on this short hike. Binoculars provided. June 22.

"Taking the Ug out of Bug": Many times we think of insects as pests, but most insects are actually beneficial. A talk will center on common insects and their importance. June 29.

"Kids for the Environment": Our environment is in critical danger. Come learn what can be

done to protect our natural resources and run a race to help save our planet. Wear shoes you can run in. July 6.

"Reptiles": Did you know that reptiles are some of the most ancient creatures on earth? Reptiles have some very cool characteristics that help them to live on this planet. Come find out what some of them are. July 13.

All children must be accompanied by an adult. A state motor vehicle permit is required for entry.

Bone marrow transplant link hosts free seminar on June 24

For some forms of cancer, transplant is a potential treatment.

The National Bone Marrow Transplant Link (nbmtLink) is hosting "Ask the Experts" on Saturday, June 24, from 12:30 to 5 p.m. at the Livonia Civic Center Library, east of Farmington

Rd. There is no charge.

The program is for patients who are considering a bone marrow or stem cell transplant and for those who have already had a transplant. Discussion groups focusing on pre-transplant, post-transplant and breast cancer issues will convene following a

panel discussion. Families and friends are welcome.

Leading medical experts will participate in the activities. Among them will be Dr. Joseph Uberti from the University of Michigan Cancer Center. Included in the program are BMT nurses, social workers, survivors

and caregivers. This is the fifth year for the "Ask the Experts" program. This year support comes from the Pietrasuk Family Foundation, the J.P. McCarthy Foundation, Amgen, Coram Healthcare and the Jewish Fund. For information call (800) 546-8268.

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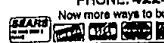
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