

Everyone needs a holiday. But we all want to come home and find everything as we left it. Almost half of all burglaries happen when a flat or house is empty.

By following these simple tips you can help to make your home more secure while you are away.

Before you go

- Make your home look like someone is living in it. Don't close your curtains in daytime this shows the house is empty. Use automatic timer-switches to turn your lights on when it goes dark. But not in downstairs room that can be seen through a window from the street.
- Cancel any milk or newspaper deliveries.
- Avoid discussing holiday plans where strangers may hear details of your absence from home.
- Cut the lawn before you go and trim back any plants that burglars could hide behind.
- Uncollected mail is a sign that you are away. The Royal Mail's 'Keepsafe' service will keep your mail for up to two months while you are away. Cost approx £13 for 17 days in 2015
- Consider leaving important documents and valuable items with other family members, a bank, or lock them in a safe. Safes need to be securely bolted to floors and walls.
- Do not put your home address on your luggage when you are travelling to your holiday destination.
- If you normally leave valuable pedal cycles or similar items in your shed, consider putting them in the house.
- Try not to leave valuable items, like your TV, hi-fi, video or DVD, Games Consoles where thieves can see them through a window.
- Keep a list of the make, model and serial number of these items and take photos of any valuable items that can't be marked, like jewellery. Register them on www.immobilise.com
- Make sure that you have up-to-date contents and buildings insurance.
- Put all your tools away so they cannot be used to break into your house and lock your garage and shed with proper security locks.
- If you have to leave a ladder out, put it on its side and lock it to a secure fixture with a 'close shackle' padlock or heavy-duty chain.
- Finally, make sure that you've locked all outside doors and windows and, if you have a burglar alarm, make sure it is set.

It's a good idea to get help from your neighbours. You could ask them to collect post, sweep up leaves, mow the lawn, open and close curtains, and so on. They could even occasionally park their car on your driveway. Anything to make the place look lived in. You can repay the favour by doing the same for them. Warn your neighbour not to put your surname, address or even your house number on your keys in case they fall into the wrong hands.

Let your neighbour know when you will be away and, if you can, give them details so that they can contact you, or someone who can act on your behalf, in an emergency.

Lastly.... **Enjoy your holiday.**