



When you leave your home for a quick holiday getaway you'll want to take some basic safety precautions to keep your house and belongings as safe as you can. This makes most of us think about burglarproofing, but preparations extend beyond locking your doors or setting timers for your lights.

1. HOLD YOUR MAIL

A huge pile of mail on the front doorstep, or envelopes pouring out your mail slot is an instant tip-off that no one's home. If you'll be gone for more than a few days, go to the post office to place a hold on your mail. Put a hold on your daily paper, too. If you don't have the time or inclination, ask a trusted neighbor to collect the goods daily.

2. CREATE THE ILLUSION OF SOMEONE HOME

Beyond setting your lights on a timer, you can also set the television and radio on a timer to create the typical noise and flickering lights of an average family home at night. But wait, that's not all! Leave a car in the driveway. During the winter, arrange for snow removal in case of a storm. If you normally leave toys outside, or keep a hose unrolled, or do anything that shows signs of a home being lived in, don't tidy up too much before you leave.

3. WATCH WHAT YOU POST ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Potential burglars are like hawks on social media. They look through posts seeking out information on the types of gifts people have received, or when they plan to leave their homes for Christmas shopping or for vacation. Do not post anything until you return home.

4. TRUST A FRIEND

Give your vacation contact info and a spare key to at least one friend or neighbor. That way, they'll know how to contact you in case of emergency.

5. ADVERTISE YOUR SECURITY

Especially when you're away, it can be a great idea to advertise your security measures. If you're worried that alarm company signs will clue thieves in to how to break in, buy signs from a different company. Install fake security cameras (the kind that look authentic). Do whatever it takes to get across the message, "This is not the home you are looking for."

6. UNPLUG

Unplug all unnecessary appliances (except those on timers) to protect your home from an electrical fire or power surge. This goes for the big stuff, like TVs, but also for your toaster, your coffee maker, and other small appliances.

7. HIDE THE HIDE-A-KEY

It's impossible to forget your key if you're not even home, so go ahead and take any hidden spare keys out of commission. Just don't forget to re-hide them when you return!

8. SAFE-KEEP YOUR VALUABLES

Lock up jewelry, the deed to your home, wills, and any other valuables or sensitive documents in a fire-proof safe.

9. MAKE SURE GIFTS ARE NOT VISIBLE FROM OUTSIDE

It's such a common sight during this time of the year – a frosted window from which you can see a beautiful Christmas tree all lit up, with dozens of gifts underneath it. This sight is enough to make a potential burglar size up your house.

That's why you need to make sure that your tree and the gifts underneath it are not visible from outside. Remove temptation and you reduce the chances of becoming a burglary victim.

10. GIFT PACKAGING

If you've gotten gifts during the holiday season, you may get so caught up with enjoying them that you don't pay attention to disposing of the packaging. If you put the packaging out in the trash, which will then be sitting by the curb waiting to be picked up, you're basically telling the whole world what sort of gifts are inside. Burglars are always on the lookout for such garbage items

11. BE WARY OF DOOR TO DOOR DONATION SEEKERS

During the holiday season people seeking donations for various charitable causes may show up at your residence. The unfortunate thing is that you can't really be sure about whether these individuals actually do represent the organizations that they claim to. It could be a scam where they try to get some money out of you, or they may carry out some form of a survey, from which they can try to determine when would be the best time to break into your home.

CAUTION: Be wary, do not give out any personal information, and don't give out any money without asking to see their credentials.

**If you suspect a scam contact the Frederick County Sheriff's office at 301-600-1046 or the Frederick County Emergency Communications Center, non-emergency line, at 301-600-2071.

**Going away this holiday season? Place your home
on our "Vacation Check" list. Contact
emmitsburgdeputies@emmitsburgmd.gov**

Have a great holiday season!