



Home Owners: Top 10 Safety Tips For Spring Break Crime Prevention

- **Never ever advertise you are leaving town:** Social media is a great way to share excitement with friends, but wait till after the trip to tell where you've been. Don't broadcast to criminals that you and your family will be away. If you have children in college, remind them not to Facebook, blog, or tweet about your family's absence from home.
- **Create the illusion of occupancy:** While away remember to cancel delivery of the mail and newspaper or arrange for a trusted neighbor to pick them up along with any delivered packages. If it snows, make sure someone shovels the walk and takes the trash cans in and out so there is an illusion of occupancy.
- **Lights, too:** Put lights on timers now so there can be an established look of occupancy (Don't forget to set the timers for daylight savings time). A timer on your TV - so it's on when you'd normally be watching - is also a good idea.
- **Lock all windows and doors in your house:** Keep valuables away from windows, lower blinds and close curtains so passers-by can't view these items. Remember, a significant amount of crime can be deterred if home owners do not create easy opportunities for the criminal element. Turn your home phone ringer off or down because a loud, unanswered phone can tip someone off that you're not home.
- **Garage, too:** Keep your car locked and the windows shut even if it is parked in the garage, and take your keys with you. If your house is broken into, there is no need to provide the thief with a car. You also force them to carry items out of a front or back door since your car is parked in the garage blocking an easy exit. You may also want to un-plug your garage door opener and lock the garage door while out of town (Just don't forget to unlock it and plug it in when you get home).
- **Trust a good neighbor:** Make sure a dependable neighbor watches your house and has a house key.
- **Alarms:** Make sure a neighbor has a way to shut off any alarms, if you have them. If there are storms or electrical issues your alarm could go off several times a day while you are gone. Returning home to find out you are being billed for several false alarms would spoil the end of a relaxing vacation.
- **In case of emergency:** Make sure a neighbor or relative has your cell number or a way to get in contact with you if there is any home emergency.
- **Utilities:** It's always a good idea to turn back the temperature of your water heater, shut off the water to your washing machine (washing machine hose breaks are at the top of the list when it comes to home damage costs). Also, having someone check your house daily will give you peace of mind knowing that your pipes aren't freezing or a garage door malfunction hasn't opened your garage door while you are away.
- **Don't forget about your pet:** If you have pets (especially a dog), a pet sitter can be a valuable asset for crime prevention. The irregular schedule of a person coming and going from the residence, and the sound of a barking dog can be a big deterrent to burglar.