

HOLIDAY HOME SECURITY

We can get much too busy at this time of the year but I hope you'll take the extra time to take care of keeping your home safe.

If you have a wood burning fireplace, don't use it unless you have had the chimney inspected and cleaned. It's not worth the risk of a chimney fire. The same goes for wood stoves and wood furnaces. Speaking of furnaces, be sure to have your gas and oil furnaces cleaned and serviced. Left to get their working parts dirty, they too over time, can become a fire hazard.

Many of us travel at this time of year, as families need to get together. If you are going to be away, be sure to arrange for a friend, neighbour or a professional snow removal company to clear the snow away from your driveway and sidewalk. Failing to do so makes it too obvious that you are not home. Thieves can readily see there are no tire tracks in the snow and that your car has not been coming and going.

Also, put timers on your exterior Christmas lights. If they come on and go off at a consistent time each evening it implies the household is running as it normally does, giving no clues to the contrary to would-be thieves. It's good practice to put timers on a few lights and perhaps on a radio inside your home for the same reason.

Before you leave, take your small valuables to your safety deposit box. If you do have a break-in you'll be glad you didn't leave those treasures in harms way. At the very least, find a really good hiding place in your home for them. Do not select your dresser drawers, your bathroom vanity drawers, your fridge or your freezer. Most thieves know to look in those places first.

Of course, do remember to get the newspaper delivery stopped or have your neighbour pick them up as soon after delivery as possible.

Another security tip for you is about gift boxes. Many of us give and receive electronics at Christmas. We give video games, home theatre sets, TVs, DVD players etc etc. If you put the empty boxes the appliances came in out on the curb for pickup, it's a billboard telling what new electronics are now inside your home. Either dispose of the boxes yourself or if you must leave them at the curb cut them up so that you can bundle them with only the unlabelled sides visible.

Monitored security systems are an excellent idea. This can be done for a reasonably small fee. Many alarm companies will install a basic home package for no cost as long as you sign a monitoring contract. Usually the contract is for three years. Most fees I've heard for that service are thirty something dollars per month. That is good value for the added peace of mind it gives.

I hope you'll have a secure and happy holiday season.

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