



Sugar Land Police Department

Summer is officially here, and some of us are so eager to get away that when vacation time comes around, we throw caution to the wind, and fail to take the usual precautions that keep us safe day-to-day. Let's start from the beginning...planning!

By taking a few easy steps, you can save yourself a lot of trouble during your time away. Know your schedule and plan for "what-ifs". Before anything else, map out the dates and times that you will be away from your home. Allow for airport delays, car trouble, unexpected difficulties and other hazards that may occur on your vacation. Be sure that you have arrangements to take care of your home and your other obligations in case you aren't able to return on your scheduled date.

Contact the police to set up a "House Watch". The House Watch Program is designed to provide homeowners a means of having their residence checked periodically by an officer or trained civilian volunteer when they are away from home on vacation or an extended weekend. In order to participate in the program, you can come by the Police Department or complete the on-line form on http://www.sugarlandtx.gov/police/services/programs/house_watch.asp. The homeowner must be away from his/her residence for more than three (3) days and must not have anyone staying at the home while he/she is away. Homes can be placed on house watch for a maximum of three (3) weeks.

If you have a house-sitter, make sure it is someone you know and trust. Do not accept strangers as house-sitters, no matter how good their references! They are still strangers in your home when you are away.

In the age of constant social media updates, be careful of what you post! It's best if you exercise caution when posting your vacation plans on any social networks. Even if you only befriend people you trust, it's still important to realize that you are advertising to the world that you won't be home for a specified amount of time. With Apps using GPS and Contact Tracing efforts, your physical location is broadcast across the internet for the whole world to see, so thieves know that you're not home! There is a great article about this very topic that can be found here:

www.cdt.org/blogs/cdt/over-sharing-and-location-awareness

Alarm systems are great if used properly. Before leaving your home for vacation, check to ensure that all sensors are in working order. While you're at it, beef up security! Add motion or glass break sensors to the system. You can also add cameras that can be accessed remotely while

you're away via computer or smartphone. Notify your alarm company to contact the police directly instead of calling you if there is an activation. This will cut down on the time it takes for police to respond to the alarm.

Check your locks. If necessary, replace any locks that could potentially compromise your home's security. Be sure that all exterior doors (including the door leading to the garage) have deadbolts properly installed. Reinforcing the door frame will help to keep burglars out. Metal deadbolts don't fail, wooden door frames do.

Keep your schedule. A lot of people like to put timers on lights and televisions while they are away. This is a good idea, but don't make it look out of the ordinary. If you normally go to sleep at 11pm, don't have the lights stay on in your kitchen until 1am. Set timers for the times the lights are normally on. Take every step to make your home look occupied.

Stop your mail or have a trusted friend/neighbor pick it up for you. Leaving newspapers and mail on the front doorstep is like putting a signboard saying "we're not home!" on your front lawn.

After all of that...try to have fun! Worrying about your home while you're away might be inevitable, but it doesn't have to spoil your time with friends and family. Trust that you've taken the right steps and have done what you can to prevent a burglary and enjoy your time away! You work hard...you deserve it!