

*** * * 8 Tips on How to Protect Your Home While You're Away * * ***

This may surprise you: The FBI's 2000 Uniform Crime Reports Program has found that the largest number of burglaries occur during July and August. Plus, 60 percent of all residential burglaries occur during the daytime -- rather than at night, as most of us believe.

Here are 8 tips to help you reduce the chances that you'll be victimized when you go on vacation:

1. Check all doors and windows (including those in your garage) to make sure they are secure. All doors, if possible, should have dead bolt locks.
2. Buy light timers, put them in different rooms, and set them so that different lights come on at different times while you're away.
3. Check your outside lighting, and replace dim and burned out bulbs. Consider installing external motion-detection lights.
4. Make sure that hedges and trees are pruned so they don't provide intruders with either access or cover.
5. Don't leave spare keys hidden outside (burglars know all the hiding places). Instead, consider giving a key to a close friend or relative if you want someone to keep an eye on your home while you're gone. Leave this trusted person your itinerary and contact info in case of an emergency.
6. Try to make your home look like people are living there while you're away. Consider stopping newspaper deliveries and mail to make sure they don't collect where burglars can see. (Or better yet, have someone pick them up daily so that your newspaper carrier, etc. does not know you're away.)
7. Don't announce your travel plans publicly (such as posts on message boards or newsgroups). Don't change your message on your answering machine. Do not use "on vacation" email bots. And be very selective about whom you tell your vacation plans.
8. When you leave, be very careful to double-check that all doors and windows are securely locked and that your light timers are properly set.