



Office of the Sheriff

ANOKA COUNTY SHERIFF JAMES STUART

Don't tell a thief: "We're on vacation; come on in." Many people leave their home dark and empty when they go on vacation. Nobody mows the lawn, shovels the driveway, picks up the mail or newspapers, turns out the lights, or pulls the curtains at night. This is just what a thief is looking for! We have prepared the following information to help you to ensure the safety and security of your home while you are away. Much of this information involves making your home look occupied to discourage burglars and thieves. Some of these recommendations require the help of a trusted neighbor. The Anoka County Sheriff's Office is here to help, but alert and concerned neighbors are your best protection against crime.

Lights - Interior lights should be left on or placed on automatic timers. Use at least two timers in different portions of your home to create the illusion of movement. Motion sensor lights should be installed near patio doors and entrances. Curtains should be left in their normal position or changed from time to time by the person watching your home.

Vehicles - Vehicles left in the driveway might make it appear as if someone is home. All valuables should be removed from the vehicles and they should be locked, whether they are left outside or inside a garage. You should keep a list of license plate numbers and VIN numbers in case of theft. Boats, campers, vehicles, and sheds are especially vulnerable to theft and vandalism. Take extra steps in securing these things when you are on vacation.

Security - Install a good deadbolt lock on each entry door. Use high security strike plates with 3" screws. Install good locks on all windows, especially those on ground level. Remove all cranks on crank-out windows if nobody is going to be home. Don't rely on factory installed locks on sliding patio doors. A "Charlie Bar" or wood dowel should be placed in the track to prevent the door from opening. Make sure there is not a lot of "play" between the dowel and the door.

Garage - Close and lock all garage doors. Many thieves have been able to defeat garage door openers by trying several transmitter settings or by jarring the door until the opener releases from the track. You may want to consider disabling the opener by disconnecting it from the power source while away from home. Many home burglaries occur when the garage service door is left unlocked or armed with a weak lock that can be forced open. All garage service doors that lead to the home should be secured with a deadbolt lock. Cover all garage windows to prevent anyone from seeing the contents and whether or not your car is in there.

Appliances - Be sure to unplug or disconnect all unnecessary appliances and equipment.

Yard - Arrange for someone to mow your lawn or shovel the snow off the driveway and sidewalk. Don't allow garbage to collect outside where it can be seen. Trim all bushes and trees, This prevents crooks



from hiding behind them and allows neighbors to see more clearly. Move all ladders, lawn tools, yard furniture, ornaments, and other items to an inside secured location such as a shed, garage or basement.

Deliveries - Arrange to have all deliveries canceled, including U.S. mail, newspapers, private carriers, etc. Have them forwarded or picked up by someone you trust. If you plan to be away for an extended period of time, you may wish to have subscriptions canceled. Ask a neighbor to collect all the flyers and papers from your front step or your “paper box” for you.

Records - Create a complete list of all valuables in your home. This list should include the make, model, and serial numbers for valuables. Operation ID will provide the forms necessary to record this information. Insurance companies are better able to process claims resulting from fire, theft or other damage with this information. Store the forms in a safe place such as a safe deposit box outside the home’s location. Photographs or videotapes of your home, and its contents, can also be helpful.

Keyholders - Leave the keys to your home with someone you trust. Inform them of your itinerary so they know where you will be, your phone number and when you will be back. Also leave names and phone numbers of relatives or friends who should be contacted in case of a fire, burglary, or other emergencies. Have the keyholder or other person check your house each day for anything unusual. Have them notify the police by calling 911 if they see or hear anything suspicious.

Pets - If you leave your pet in the care of someone else, make sure they know the closest veterinarian location and phone number. Most vets will not provide services, even emergency care, unless the person who brings the pet in has the ability to pay at the time services are rendered. Remember all pet doors at your home should be secured completely to prevent other animals or thieves from entering.

If someone wants to get into your home, he/she can probably find a way, but most burglaries and thefts are a crime of opportunity committed by an amateur. This means that the more difficult it is for someone to enter your home, the more likely it is that he/she will move on to a home that is less secure.

By using these suggestions, you can reduce your chance of being victimized by theft or burglary. Remember, the Anoka County Sheriff’s Office is here to help. If you want to place a **“Vacation Request”** with our office, go to anokacounty.us/2399/Vacation-Check or call 763-324-5000. A deputy will stop by your home periodically, while you are gone, and observe the home and property for any suspicious activity. But remember, a trusted neighbor is always your best asset. Have a safe and wonderful vacation!