



FSA - Keeping You Safe

Safeguarding Your Home

Millions of us travel to visit family and friends for the holiday season, and this creates prime season for thieves to start casing houses. Burglaries can occur randomly, but many times thieves will watch for patterns to know when homeowners are no longer within the property.

Home burglaries are more common than you likely think. According to the FBI, a home burglary occurs every 26 seconds in the United States, so it is important to not only make plans with your family and friends when you arrive to them safely, but it is also important to make a plan for your house.

The following tips have been compiled from several operations that our Florida sheriffs have established to best prepare your home for safety when traveling away for the holidays:

1. **Safeguard Your Home** – Securing entry points of your home is critical. Lock all the doors and windows in your home. It is also important to lower your blinds and close your curtains so that people cannot look into your home.
2. **Secure Personal Documents and Valuables** – Any jewelry, cash, small electronic devices, or other items that can be easily moved and have a high monetary value should be put into a secured location that isn't out in the open parts of your house. Documents with your personal information should also be placed in these secure locations to reduce the likelihood of identity theft.
3. **Mail Delivery** – Utilize the United States Postal Service (USPS) Hold Mail Service while you are gone. This service will hold your mail while you are out of town and compile it for your return. An overfull mailbox is an easy identifier for thieves that you have been away from your home for an extended amount of time.
4. **Before You Walk Out the Door** – If you have an alarm, remember to set it. There are also devices that allow you to set a timer for your lamps so that you can set the light on a timer and give the appearance that you are home. Finally, if you have a trusted neighbor or family member that lives nearby, let them know you are leaving and when you are returning. Kindly ask for them to pick up any packages that arrive outside your USPS Hold Service.
5. **When You Return Home** – Look around your house to see if anything looks out of place. If so, immediately go to a safe place and call law enforcement.

Preparing your home isn't the only precaution that you should take. If you use social media, it is important to check in on your privacy settings so that you aren't sharing holiday activities with the general public. Unfortunately, it isn't uncommon that a thief is someone that you know. If you do want to share your holiday photos with your family and friends, it is best to be patient and post them to your social media accounts once you return home.

The FSA and Florida's Sheriffs wish you a happy and safe Holiday season!

For more tips please visit the Florida Sheriffs Association's Crime Prevention Tips: flsheriffs.org/crime-prevention.