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Vacation Safety Tips

Preventative planning:

- Inform neighbors you know and trust that you will be going away. Tell them the date you will depart and return. Inform them if you will have a house sitter. Leave your vacation address and telephone number so you can be reached in case of an emergency. Tell your neighbors to call 911 immediately if there is an emergency.
- Make arrangements to have the lawn mowed and leaves picked up.
- Use timers to run lights and a radio tuned to a talk station on and off during expected hours. Leave shades and blinds in a normal position.
- Have good locks on all doors and windows and use them. Secure storage sheds, attic entrances and gates. Consider taking valuables to a bank safety deposit box. Make sure to lock the garage door and disable the automatic door opener. (Thieves can gain entry to your house by using a scanner-like device to crack the code on your automatic door opener. If your house has sliding glass doors, be sure to leave them locked and use a professional blocking system or a one-inch dowel cut to the length of the door to prohibit anyone from "jimmying" the door open.
- Test your smoke and burglar alarms. Check to make sure that all stoves and electrical appliances have been turned off or disconnected. Unplug all television sets, and computers. Turn off the water to the house to prevent rupturing of a hose or water line.
- If you have an alarm system, leave a current list of contacts with your alarm company in case your system activates. False alarms may be fined.
- Double check that every door and window is locked as you leave.

Simulating a "lived-in" appearance:

- Arrange for a neighbor to pick up your mail, newspaper and packages. Have a neighbor place garbage cans at the curb on your normal pickup day(s) and return them after the garbage pickup is made.
- Turn the bell or ringer on your telephone down low. If a burglar is around, he won't be alerted to your absence by a ringing telephone.
- If you have call forwarding on your telephone, forward your calls to your cell phone, a trusted friend or relative.
- Don't announce your absence on answering machine messages; leave your normal message on the machine.
- Close and lock garage doors and windows. Ask a neighbor to occasionally park in your driveway. If you leave your car at home, park it as you normally would. Vehicles parked outside should be moved occasionally to appear that they are being used.
- When you return from your vacation, check your smoke detector to make sure it is functioning.