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Play It Smart, Before You Walk Away

Homes and apartments in the United States today are burglarized every 20 seconds! Chances are the burglar was attracted to these homes by seemingly insignificant clues. Thieves look for what police call "targets of opportunity."

Planning ahead can keep you from becoming one of the victims, especially when you are going to be away from your home for an extended period.

- Arrange for local police to check your house regularly if the police department in your community offers this service.
- Double check second floor and basement windows, areas which are often forgotten. Be sure also that your garage doors are locked.
- Make sure exterior areas don't reveal your absence. Arrange to have mail and deliveries stopped or picked up by a neighbor. Leave a car in the driveway. Have outside lights turned off and on with a home timer. Arrange to have the lawn cut and bushes trimmed.
- Have several home timers attached to lights in various locations throughout the house. One home timer can be programmed to turn one light on and off several times during the evening. Several home timers performing the same function can provide a "lived in" look, deterring burglars.
- Ask your neighbors to check your home regularly, and leave a number with them where you can be reached in an emergency. If your travel plans are unstructured, be sure to check in regularly. Ask neighbors to use your garbage cans. Spotters for burglars sometimes work for refuse collectors. Ask neighbors also to pick up any handbills or circulars.
- While it is advisable to notify police and a neighbor of your plans, don't tell everyone. Don't leave notes on the door, and don't change your answering machine message to indicate that you are away.
- If, upon returning from your trip, you spot evidence of a break-in, do not enter the house. Call the police at once! The burglar, possibly armed, may still be within the house.

Doors and windows should be equipped with deadbolt locks rather than spring bolt locks which are simple for burglars to open.

Of course, vacations vary considerably. You might be at one hotel for the duration, or camping cross-country. You might be driving, or traveling via public transportation and perhaps driving a rental around your destination locality.

You'll want to make it as easy as possible for people back home to locate you in an emergency. Make sure you leave your travel plans with a friend or family member and schedule routine calling times.

We hope you enjoy your travel and find the information provided useful.

PRE-DEPARTURE TRAVEL PLAN

Some of the do not forget items needed to be remembered before walking out the door:

- ✓ **Camera and film**
- ✓ **Camcorder and video tape**
- ✓ **Medications (prescription and non-prescription)**
- ✓ **First aid kit**
- ✓ **Eyeglasses and sunglasses**
- ✓ **Insurance information**
- ✓ **Baby supplies**
- ✓ **Toiletries**
- ✓ **Swimsuits**
- ✓ **Beach toys**
- ✓ **Sun block and tanning lotion**
- ✓ **Driver's License and Passport**
- ✓ **Comfortable walking shoes**
- ✓ **Hats, caps or visors**
- ✓ **Umbrellas and rain jackets**
- ✓ **Money, travelers checks**
- ✓ **ATM cards and credit cards**
- ✓ **Phone numbers and addresses**
- ✓ **Reading materials**
- ✓ **Games and small toys**
- ✓ **Golf clubs or tennis racquets**
- ✓ **Small tote bag or waist pack for day use**
- ✓ **Backpacks for long days at theme parks**
- ✓ **An extra bag for souvenirs!**