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Going Away? Secure your home with a Neighborhood Watch **When you're away, home security depends on a helping hand** **(and extra eyes).**

By Nicole Labrasca, Liberty Mutual Group

It's much easier to relax on vacation if you know trusted neighbors are watching your home. Before you leave town, arrange for them to do the following – and don't forget to return the favor when they take a trip.

- Collect any deliveries. Even if you have mail and newspaper delivery stopped, neighbors should watch for packages.
- Park their car in your driveway occasionally (or move your car) so it looks like someone is home.
- Set out your garbage can for normal pickup and put it away afterward.
- Maintain your lawn.
- Keep an eye on your property – and call the police if they see something suspicious.
- Act for you in an emergency. (Leave them a spare key, instructions and codes for your security system and information about how to reach you.)

If You Can't Ask a Neighbor for Help

To ease your mind, take the following actions:

- Keep your travel plans quiet.
- If you haven't already, install a security system and motion-detector lights.
- Ask a friend or relative to stay at your home while you're gone. If that's not possible, ask someone to stop by your house to check on it once or twice a day.
- Notify local police about your trip. Some communities offer home-watch programs.

Before You Go

Complete this checklist to secure your home when you head out of town.

- Arrange to have mail and packages picked up or held.
- Stop newspaper delivery.
- Move cash, jewelry and other valuables to a safe-deposit box.



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- Set lights, a radio and a TV on automatic timers to give the illusion that you're home. (Use several for the most realistic effect.)
- Lower the sound of your telephone ringer and answering machine.
- Leave your regular greeting on your voice mail or answering machine. Don't announce that you are away.
- Turn off water to the washing machine so hoses won't burst and flood the house.
- Lock all doors. Long dead bolts are best. Don't forget the side garage door and rear doors. Sliding doors should be equipped with special locks (or, in a pinch, place a broom handle or similar item in the door channel).
- Lock all windows.
- Leave curtains, shades and blinds in their normal position.
- Activate your security system.

Nicole Labrasca is a National Account Manager with Liberty Mutual Group in (Algonquin, IL). Liberty Mutual is the nation's eighth-largest provider of personal lines of insurance products in the U.S. The company sells full lines of coverage for automobile, homeowners, valuable possessions and personal liability insurance. Call 1- 888-412-3727 for a no obligation quote.