



..... Fixing to Fly The Coop? .....

# *Prep Your Home* for *Vacation*

..... with These *Helpful Tips*  .....

**T**he idea of vacation is what keeps a lot of us going through the drudgery of the workweek or when life generally gets us down, but moments in the sun are much sweeter when you know your abode is safe—and still standing. Though vacationing is all about relaxation, a bit of work beforehand goes a long way to a triumphant return. Where you begin will depend on how thorough you are, whether you have pets or plants, and even what region you live in.

### *Check Yourself Before You Wreck Your...Vacation*

Professional organizers suggest keeping a vacation checklist handy to streamline your departure prep, considering that it's hard to remember everything you did for the last trip when you're so excited for the next. Getting your pet ready for boarding, watering plants, unplugging small appliances and electrical devices, tidying up, cleaning out the fridge, taking out the trash and catching up on laundry are items you'll want to make sure to attend to, so you're not returning to a disheveled (and possibly smelly) dwelling after exiting your state of zen.

### *Spare the Spare Key, Step Up the Upkeep*

If you typically keep a spare key under a rock, above a door or in any other conspicuous locale, consider (even if only temporarily) having a neighbor or friend hold onto it. If you're particularly chummy with your neighbors, ask if they wouldn't mind parking in your driveway while you're gone. In line with not letting your home look abandoned,

drop the newspaper and mail delivery while you're away, but make sure yard upkeep is on point. Just as burglars typically know where to look for spare key hiding spots, they also know a sure sign of a vacationer is too-long grass and mail piled at the front door.

### *Hello, Weather Hazards*

Depending on where you live, the weather can be a worry when you're away from your home. Vicious storms sending branches through windows, winter snows putting heavy weight on flat roofs, pipes bursting from deep freeze, excessive heat engineering fires and other weather-related nightmares can put a real damper on your escape. Due diligence does double duty when it comes to weather, so ask a neighbor, friend or relative to keep an eye out or do a drive-by to ensure your property is still copacetic after severe storms or snowfall. Be sure to turn off the water valves to the dishwasher, washing machine and sinks, put the water heater on its vacation setting and lower the thermostat before you go, so your pipes stay protected from freezing and plants stay alive. Ensuring your smoke detectors are in working order is another smart step to safeguard your home.

### *Electronic Friends Aren't Hard to Find*

Today's remote monitoring and home automation systems are more than just circuit boards and cameras, they're your personal spies and OCD-appeasers. If you have a home alarm, notify your security company of your vacation as step one to safeguard your dwelling. In the worst-case scenario, a tripped

alarm will get police on their way in mere minutes. What's more, many of today's popular remote monitoring systems feature app connectivity, allowing you to access camera feeds from your web-enabled smartphone so you can get a firsthand glimpse at what's going on. Home automation, on the other hand, allows you to turn lights on and off at different times of day, turn on noisy televisions, radios and more, making your home seem like a hotbed of activity even if it's a total snooze fest inside. Prominently displaying alarm company signage is also an effective touch, doing more than you might think to deter would-be burglars.

Though it's tempting to shrug off some of these to-dos to get a head start on your vacationing, it's truly very little effort to ensure peace of mind. After all, coming home might be a bummer because your trip's come to a close, but it's far better knowing you did your homework—literally.

