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Before you skip town, it's important to ensure the safety of your biggest asset. Take a few minutes to mitigate the risk of a break-in so you can sleep a little easier while you are away and really sink your feet into that relaxation time you so deserve.

Step 1. Update your insurance.

Some home insurance companies require that you tell them if you are going away for an extended period. The time frame for every company is different, so check with yours to find out what your policy says. If in doubt, call them up and have it noted on your file that you are leaving town. It can't hurt!

Step 2. Leave a radio and a few LED lights on.

An alarm system is your safest bet (more on that shortly), but there are strategies you can employ to deter would-be burglars before they get close enough to smash a window. Leave a few strategic lights on inside your home - but make sure they are LED bulbs so they don't become a fire risk and don't cost you a lot in power. Leave a radio on too, to make it sound like people are home.

Step 3. Buy yourself a security system.

DIY security systems are great value for money. Check out Amazon or your local tech store for ideas. Many systems now come with built-in cameras you can monitor from your smartphone.

Step 4. Stay off social media.

Have a frank discussion with your family about the dangers of posting holiday pics on social media. This may be a hard argument to win but the ideal scenario would be that everyone refrains from posting any holiday pictures online until you are safely back at home. That way you won't be broadcasting the fact that your home is vacant all over the internet.

Step 5. Talk to your neighbours.

In this modern age, it is not uncommon to live in a home and never get to know the people who live on either side of you. Break the cycle this year

by introducing yourself and discussing your plans for the holiday period. As a bare minimum, you might end up being able to watch out for each other's prized possessions. The end result could be a lasting friendship for years to come!

Step 6. Do a final scan once everyone is in the car.

It is always easier to check around the house once kids and pets are safely in the car and out of your hair. Leaving the house is a stressful time and you may not be thinking clearly at this final point. So, take a deep breath and give your brain a chance to think of those last-minute items you don't want to forget. Check all windows are closed (unless you want them open) and double-check all doors are locked. Don't forget to lock your internal-access garage door too.

Extra tips for extended time away...

Travelling for more than 3 weeks? Here are a few extra steps you can take to keep your home safe:

Turn non-essential appliances off at the wall

Turn off washing machine taps

Turn off your hot water cylinder

Mow the lawns the day before you go

Have a quick check of your guttering system to make sure it isn't blocked

Remove all organic rubbish from your property

Ask a friend to check in on your home once a week

Now that you have all your bases covered. Go and relax and enjoy your holiday! You deserve it.

If your thoughts turn to real estate whilst you are away and you start thinking a move could be part of your future, it would be my pleasure to help. You can call or email me at any time to arrange a no-obligation consultation to discuss your requirements.

I wish you a happy and fun holiday season.