

Summer is here

Now we finally have long days and pleasant evenings we all want to enjoy the outdoors as much as possible – but we should remember to be vigilant when leaving our homes unoccupied.

Warm weather means opening windows, back doors, patio doors, and so on. It is easy to think everything is closed if you are rushing to pick up the kids or go to the supermarket.

Double-check everything is closed. Make a point of checking every door handle as well. Even when we do have time to check, it is easy to think that a small window upstairs cannot be used to gain access. You might not be able to squeeze through, but a slim youth might be able to.

Telescopic ladders that reach upper windows are easy for burglars to carry around. Can a burglar get access to an open upstairs windows from next door's extension (or yours, for that matter)? Can a burglar climb over a locked back gate using a wheelie bin, or something else?

And don't forget the shed or garage. They also need a good lock. Thefts from sheds and outhouses are common. Your bike may well be very valuable at the moment. A garden spade can easily smash a double-glazed window.

All the preventions above should cost very little. To take things to the next level, try:

1. Fitting a motion-detecting light to the back of the property to ward off burglars at night
2. Buying a CCTV camera you can view with your phone
3. Fitting a doorbell with a camera. These are recommended by the police
4. Fitting a decent alarm system – the ultimate deterrent

So we've done the house, shed and garage. What about the car? Catalytic converter thefts are still happening. So park your car where criminals cannot easily jack it up to get underneath and saw the catalyst off (it only takes them 60 seconds). When going away, park the car behind locked gates or in your garage if you can. Make sure the car keys are hidden indoors where a burglar would never find them, or hand them to your neighbour for safe-keeping. Finally, don't forget the age-old advice of not leaving anything of value in the car clearly visible to a passer-by.

Enjoy the summer and keep safe.