

## Stay secure and you can safely relax this summer

After all we've been through, most of us are hoping to get at least a staycation this summer. If you do go away anywhere, it's best not to let the burglars know your house is unoccupied. Think about the "body language" of your property. Does it look empty for a few days or more? If so, make it look occupied.

Have a wander around your neighbourhood and see if you can spot the houses that are unoccupied. If *you* can, then a *burglar* (an expert in the subject) definitely will.

On my travels around Woking, I came across some bins abandoned on the pavement outside a terraced house. Not only were the full bins blocking the pavement, but they were also there for two weeks waiting for alternate-week emptying. These bins positively shouted "we are away". Surely the owners could have asked a neighbour to bring out and put back the bins from the normal storage location no more than 10 feet away? Even if you are only going out for the day, make sure someone takes the bins in.

If you are going away this summer, then ask a friend, relative or neighbour to move things. If they have a spare door key, have them check post that may be stuffed in the letterbox or look for parcels on the doorstep. If your car is in the drive or outside the house, ask them to move it now and again to give the impression the owners have used it. Have a pot plant moved along a window ledge (perhaps you could ask them to water the plants at the same time). If you leave a car behind while you are away, make sure the keys are hidden. Too many people leave keys by the front door.

Think about getting a timer on an upstairs light so that it comes on for a few hours each evening. If you have CCTV camera, check it is working fully and connected to the internet if necessary. Ring-type doorbells need checking too.

When you leave the house, make a point of checking every window and door is locked, including the shed or garage. There may be little of value in your shed, but heavy hand tools make good weapons for smashing into a house. Never leave an unsecured ladder out, either.

It's not just physical clues that tell a burglar you are away. If you are a social media user, try not to post holiday snaps on Facebook and other public platforms. It is a clear sign you are away. Never show pictures of the interior of your house, or your car with the registration number clearly in the picture. Post the holiday snaps when you get home.

Finally, don't forget to have a great time on holiday. By following these tips and using some basic common sense, you'll be able to relax – safe in the knowledge you have thought of everything.