

# REAL ESTATE WEEKEND

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GUEST COLUMN

## How to secure a second home



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Every spring and summer, South Florida experiences an exodus of second homeowners going back north, as well as permanent residents escaping for summer vacations.

To secure your home and give you peace of mind while you're away, here is a check list to help you remember all the details:

1. Notify the police of your plans and give them the address and telephone number where you will be staying. Also do this with a friend or neighbor.

2. Remove any messages from your answering machine that will indicate you are away. If possible,

arrange to have messages picked up and returned.

3. Discontinue newspaper deliveries.

4. Have mail forwarded and/or picked up.

5. Ask a neighbor to remove weekly shopper newspapers from your driveway.

6. Arrange to have house plants watered or give them to a friend or neighbor.

7. Consider having a "house watch" service come to your home weekly to make sure it's secure.

8. If you are in a homeowners' association, let the manager or management company know of your plans.

9. Give your house keys and car keys to the police, a neighbor and/or the manager. Also leave a set in the house along with your summer address and telephone number in case of emergency.

10. Discontinue cable TV service and disconnect it at the outlets.

11. Discontinue telephone service.

12. Do continue with pest control service and make arrangements to have them let in. Or, set pest traps throughout your home.

13. Unplug the television, VCR, computer or any other kitchen and small appliances.

14. Switch off circuit breakers except for air conditioning, security alarm and security lights.

15. Thoroughly clean all appliances with baking soda and water or vinegar and water. Wipe completely dry in order to prevent mildew.

16. Add one-half to 1 cup of vinegar in the dishwasher on the last cycle, then dry on the highest cycle to evaporate any excess moisture. Leave the door open to promote circulation and deter mildew.

17. Run a tray of ice cubes through the food disposal to eliminate any food. Then run the unit with a combination of baking soda and water to deodorize it. Finally, coat the disposal with a small amount of cooking oil to prevent rusting of parts — for safety, be sure it is disconnected.

18. Thoroughly clean the refrigerator with a solution of baking soda and hot water. Completely dry all areas, including seals, and leave the door open.

19. Turn off the water to the washing machine. Rubber lines can explode.

20. Clean lint filters on washer and dryer.

21. Shut off and drain all water from water heater.

22. Make sure all windows, doors and sliding-glass doors are shut, locked and sealed properly to prevent leaking.

23. For short trips, set the air conditioner at 80 degrees.

24. For longer durations, con-

sider having a humidistat installed and have it set at 80 degrees to eliminate moisture build-up.

25. Arrange to have someone check to see if your air conditioner or humidistat are working. Bad electrical storms can trip your circuit breaker.

26. Change air conditioner filters to help eliminate moisture and any contaminants.

27. Leave all drawers, doors and closets open. Do not cover personal items, furniture or clothes with plastics. This will promote moisture and mildew growth.

28. Remove all furniture, decorative objects and lights from decks, patios and porches.

29. Remove and store inside all loose objects, such as hoses, pool equipment and pots.

30. Close all drapes, blinds and verticals to prevent fading of fabrics, carpet and furniture.

31. Arrange to have someone close all hurricane shutters prior to any storms. If they are continually closed, this is an invitation to intruders.

32. Have a friend or a service mow your lawn and regulate your

sprinkler system if you do not have a homeowners' association that maintains your property.

33. Dispose of all combustible chemicals and materials. Call your fire department for proper, safe disposal.

34. Arrange to have a service maintain the pool, chemicals and water levels. Do not lower the water level in your pool.

35. Check your security system thoroughly. If necessary, replace batteries.

36. Install timers on selected interior lights and program them to come on at varying times in different rooms throughout the house.

37. Have selected exterior lights turn on with electric eyes or photo-sensitive light devices.

38. Consider having a service open your home a day or two before you return. This will help lessen the stress of putting your home back in order.

For more information, call John Math, president, Associated Property Management of the Palm Beaches Inc., at 588-7210.

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