



Before you venture out again

Naturally with more people being at home during the Covid19 pandemic burglary numbers have fallen, and internet purchasing has increased resulting in new desirables in our homes.

When you did get out maybe someone was left in the house so locking up would not have been needed. As restrictions begin to be eased again and more of us venture out, we need to get back into our old habits ensuring that when left empty our homes are secure. Burglars are opportunists seeking an empty house that is easy to enter. Whether just popping out for a moment, or longer make it look like someone is in even if no one is there; always making sure you lock up when you leave.

Just a few tips to remind you:

- *Ensure that windows, doors, outbuildings and gates are closed and locked correctly, make sure all tools are put away too. Remember with PVCu and similar doors – when locking Lift the handle, turn and remove the key. If you have a night latch and a mortice lock ensure that you lock both not just the night latch.*
- *No keys outside in hidey holes please, the thief will find them no matter how well you think they are hidden.*
- *Create the illusion of occupancy: A radio on, a chair that looks like you have just got up, book or magazine open with a pair of spectacles and a mug next to it, a vacuum cleaner with the lead trailing out of sight (not plugged in), the usual signs of habitation and don't leave it too tidy.*
- *Consider a doorbell that you can answer remotely on your smartphone. A lot of these you can add further CCTV cameras that you listen and speak through too.*
- *Use automatic timer-switches to turn your lights on when it gets dark, also consider a "Fake TV" unit discretely hidden from view.*
- *If you have an intruder alarm make sure that you set it before leaving and ensure that your neighbours know who the keyholders are.*
- *Keys to other cars; put them away and in a "faraday bag" if you have a keyless car.*

If you do get away for a longer period:

- *Curtains open or curtains closed? – The worse thing is half open half closed, day or night the thief will know you are out. I go by the principle that some people do not close all curtains at night, but most are open during the day especially in those "lived in" rooms. So as long as you have evidence visible that looks like you are in the house somewhere then it makes sense to leave them open.*
- *Cancel any newspaper or milk deliveries, delay ordering online purchases before you go away or have them delivered to friends or family that are at home to hold until you return.*
- *Use the Royal Mail's 'Keepsafe' service - they keep your mail for up to 2 months while you're away. Mail sitting on your doorstep is a sign that you are away.*
- *Trusted neighbours may be able to help you by collecting your post, opening and closing curtains and they could park their car on your driveway.*
- *Avoid discussing holiday plans on public social networking sites, watch what you are posting including photographs (they may be date stamped) while you are away too or you may find you are giving useful information that the burglar or fraudster may use.*

Don't forget the car when you leave it unattended:

- Close the windows and lock it, verify it is locked by the sound, the flash of the lights or try the handle.
- Leave nothing on show, remember to the thief even the empty bag or jacket is inviting, they don't know what they may contain until looking in it after damaging your car getting in.
- Choose a safe place to park, with lots of visibility over it, if you can look for a "Parkmark" accredited car park <http://www.parkmark.co.uk/car-park-finder> .

Further advice can be found at www.essex.police.uk/cp/crime-prevention/ or www.securedbydesign.com/

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