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Summer Security in the Community

TIPS FOR RESIDENTS AND ASSOCIATIONS

**BY BRIE
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ummer is here, school is out, and families are ready for a vacation. After a year of canceled or postponed travel plans, you might be planning a trip yourself or returning to a second home for a break from Florida's heat. While residents prepare for extended getaways, community boards

and property managers must manage other concerns that come with a typical summer.

Whether it is your personal home or a community amenity, there are several simple measures that help protect a property. An effective security plan always includes several steps, but it starts with preventing unwanted activity. Here are a few tips for residents, boards, and property managers to do just that: prevent incidents during the summer months (and more), stay safe, and have peace of mind.

1. Befriend a Neighbor

Whether it is someone next door or down the street, a neighbor can keep an eye on your property while you are away. Not only can neighbors and friends look out for suspicious activity, but they can go a step further to make it appear as though someone is home. Invite your neighbor to park her car in the driveway while you are gone or have her check on items inside your home or unit. While making it appear as though the home is occupied, she is also able to check on appliances that may malfunction, which is especially helpful if the property is seasonal.

2. Don't Update Social Media

Wait until you return home to let your Facebook friends know about your vacation across the country or that you visited children or grandchildren a few states away. Sharing your location or posting similar updates are key indicators



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that you are not at home. Even if you are only "friends" with people that you know, it is important to exercise caution and double check the privacy settings for your social media page(s).

3. Update Your Visitor List

If your house or condominium unit is part of a gated community, make sure your list of permitted visitors is up to date before you go on vacation or head back to a second home. This is especially important if you have vendors, service providers, or delivery companies on your list, as they are likely not to be needed while you are away. Additionally, if the system allows, set up notifications to receive texts, emails, or push notifications (if available) so that you are aware of any visitor activity for your household.

4. Set Up Home Security

Invest in a home security system or doorbell camera to view your property and receive alerts. A single camera at the doorway or right inside your unit can be inexpensive and simple to install. This will bring you peace of mind while also giving you the ability to monitor your household in real time. Plus, most devices come with audio capabilities, allowing you to speak to or with anyone who enters.



5. Stop Trespassing at Amenities

With school out and many families vacationing in the Sunshine State, association boards and property managers need to keep the community amenities secure. There are several methods to do this, starting with an access control system. A web-based solution will provide the community with an electronic method that only unlocks doors and gates when an authorized credential is used. This type of system is also beneficial because scheduling features allow a community to decide the time frame that access can be granted to an area, or access can be granted based on individuals. If a credential is lost or a resident moves, access is easily deactivated or removed from the system.

Proactive video surveillance systems are also helpful for pools, clubhouses, or sports courts that should be closed overnight. With an active camera system, the amenity area is monitored during closed hours and triggers an alarm if anyone trespasses, even if the person hops a fence. In most cases, this type of video surveillance will alert a remote guard and monitoring center that allows a person to speak with trespassers in real time. Once they realize that they are being actively monitored, most will leave the area. If they don't, local authorities can be notified of the verified alarm or incident.

Whether your community is small or large, gated or not gated, simple practices and access management systems are effective in preventing burglaries, damage, and unauthorized access throughout a community. Remember that "security" begins with prevention. The presence of monitoring with cameras, visitor verification, home security, or signage is useful for deterring trespassers.

Presence is more than equipment, though. It is also how homes appear within a community and online; do they seem occupied, are they well lit, is the landscaping maintained, or has a homeowner mentioned they are away? Be a part of the community and a good neighbor if something does not look right to help keep the entire neighborhood safe and looked after. ■



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