

If You Go Away this Summer

Homeowners planning a vacation need to also plan to continue home maintenance and security to protect their house and property in their absence. Here's a quick checklist to help ensure you stay relaxed throughout your vacation:

- Make sure all mail and package deliveries are cancelled or suspended while you are away.
- Double-check that you have indoor lighting on timers, and that outdoor lights, security cameras and alerts are working properly.
- Unplug electrical devices that draw power while dormant, such as TVs, computers, AC units, kitchen appliances (but not refrigerators or freezers, unless empty and defrosted).
- Shut off your water supply if there is any danger of leaking.
- Arrange for lawn-cutting, raking and watering during an extended absence.



- Ask a trusted neighbour to do a regular visual property check to clear away advertising flyers or other signs of absent owners. Also consider providing your neighbour with a key or passcode to access inside your home in case of emergency.



Identifying Effects of Summer Solstice

Just after mid-June, the summer solstice will mark the time of year when we get the most hours of daylight. At the same time, the sun's path will climb higher in the sky, in an arc that reaches its annual zenith at midday. Due to the higher position of the overhead sun, shadows will be shorter, compared to other times of the year. This increases the amount of direct sunshine exposure on unprotected property. So, if you're planning a backyard or balcony space, observe the sunlight exposure this month for indications of where to position seating, gardening, cooking or leisure areas, as well as protective canopies.

Of course, it's even more important to protect our indoor spaces from the hot summer sun. Even though some rooms and balconies may actually receive less exposure to direct sunlight during the solstice, it pays to observe the sun's path throughout the summer. This may help you determine where heavier window drapery can assist in reducing your dependency on expensive air-conditioning – as well as help protect sunlight-sensitive plants, and help prevent carpets and furnishings from fading due to overexposure.

Smart Products for your Home

Wireless monitoring systems aren't just for home security cameras. There are lots of new products on the market that make your home more manageable, even when you're not home. Here are just a few:

- Smart air vents coordinate with your central HVAC system to open and close registers for more evenly distributed AC to various rooms, as programmed on your phone.
- Programmable deadbolt attaches to the inside of your door, and lets you control the locking mechanism from your phone.
- Wireless meat thermometer for the oven or BBQ is simply inserted into the meat and will alert your phone when the pre-set temperature is achieved.
- Monitor pad placed under your mattress reported to measure sleep-patterns such as REM, etc., without body attachments.
- Smoke and CO detector with a smart-hub speaker that lets you use voice-command to disable false alarms.
- Programmable shut-off valve that connects at your home's water supply intake, and monitors remote valves next to toilets, etc., to help prevent emergency leaks.



- Power bar that distributes electricity to various connected appliances, and reports their consumption to your smartphone, allowing you to shut off unwanted energy hogs, etc.