

## Tips for Residents Leaving Apache Wells for the Summer

Summer is approaching and that means many Apache Wells residents will be heading out of town for the summer. Unfortunately, burglars work overtime during the summer season. A vacant house that makes an appealing target for burglars during the day while occupants are at work or on a weekend get-away becomes even more appealing when its occupants are away for an extended period of time.

If you're planning to be away from home for a week or longer, follow these steps to reduce your risk of being burglarized or vandalized and give yourself greater peace of mind while you're gone. To help you remember, print the list below and carry it with you as you prepare to leave. Check off each item as you do it.

At least a day or two before you leave:

[ ] Complete an Apache Wells Departure Form and return it to the AWHOA Office. The form is available in the March and April Roundups and at the AWHOA Office. This information will assist the Security Patrol in monitoring your property while you are gone.

[ ] Ask a neighbor to pick up and hold your mail and newspapers so they don't pile up. If this isn't possible, arrange in advance for mail to be held at the post office or forwarded to your summer address and newspaper delivery to be discontinued while you're gone. Required forms are available at the post office.

[ ] Arrange to have a caretaker who will check your home on a weekly basis and tend to landscaping needs. Ask them to remove loose circulars and other papers that might accumulate by your door or in your yard. Provide them with a list of any special duties you would like them to perform.

[ ] Tell a trusted year-round neighbor about your absence so they can be alert for suspicious people or activity around your home. However, try not to over-publicize your plans to be gone.

[ ] If you don't have a caretaker, leave a key with a trusted neighbor so they can go by and inspect your home periodically while you're gone. Tell them how and where you can be reached in case of an emergency. Carry their telephone number with you so you can call periodically during your absence. Give them your car description and license plate number if you plan to leave your vehicle at home.

[ ] Set up timers to switch lights on and off during the evening hours to give the appearance that someone is at home. Ask the person checking on your house to vary the positions of your shades or blinds.

[ ] If you have valuables at your house, take them to your bank for storage in a safe deposit box while you're gone. Include an inventory of other items at your home, including serial numbers and photographs, so you'll have it for police and insurance in the event a burglary occurs.

[ ] Put ladders, tools, lawn implements and yard furnishings inside a garage or storage shed. Leave your AW rubbish receptacle where it can be seen from the street and ask a neighbor to use it periodically on a pick-up day.

On the day you leave:

[ ] Unplug electrical appliances such as radios, televisions, computers, etc., to prevent possible damage from electrical storms.

[ ] Set your thermostat so your air conditioner will maintain a reasonable temperature—80 to 90 degrees if you have items that might be damaged by the summer heat.

- [ ] Close your fireplace flue to prevent birds or animals coming in.
- [ ] Be sure all gas appliances are in good order and pilot lights are working. Turn off the gas at the main shut-off if you are going to be gone for an extended period of time.
- [ ] Turn off water to automatic washer to prevent possible water damage from a broken hose. You may choose to turn off the water completely at the main shut-off in the event of a broken pipe in your absence.
- [ ] Turn down the volume on your telephone and answering machine so they cannot be heard from outside.
- [ ] Close and lock all windows and sliding doors. Use a wooden or metal bar to secure sliding doors. Lock or fasten all screens.
- [ ] Put window shades in normal daytime position so neighbors and police can see into your house.
- [ ] Make sure any vehicle left in your driveway is locked. Do not cover it with a vehicle cover as this will let burglars know that the home is likely vacant. You may wish to leave a vehicle key for your caretaker or neighbor to start and move the vehicle periodically if you are to be gone for an extended period of time.
- [ ] Set the timer to turn lights on and off during evening hours.
- [ ] Lock your garage door.
- [ ] Lock all house doors when you leave. Walk around the house to check windows and doors.
- [ ] Leave a key with your neighbor if you haven't already done so. Make sure you have their telephone number. Contact your caretaker and remind them that you are leaving.

When you return:

- [ ] If you find a door or window that appears to have been forced or broken while you were gone, DO NOT ENTER. The criminal may still be inside. Use a neighbor's phone to call the Security Patrol or Mesa Police.
- [ ] Do not touch anything or clean up if a crime has occurred. Preserve the scene until police can inspect for evidence.

Reference: *Show Low Police Department, Show Low, AZ*