

## Keep your home safe this summer

Although some types of crime have decreased, the latest SAPS statistics show that the number of home robberies/ burglaries has risen by some 70% over the past nine years. What is more, summer is the worst time of year for such crimes, with research by Yale showing that indoor burglaries increase by at least 10% in this season, and outdoor burglaries by 41%.

So you may want to take some extra precautions over the next few months to keep your family and possessions safe, says Berry Everitt, MD of the Chas Everitt International property group,

And writing in the latest Property Signposts newsletter, he suggests that you should start by taking advantage of some relatively inexpensive technologies that can be linked and added to as your budget allows. These include:

- \* A good burglar alarm, as its shriek will often be enough to send would-be burglars running. It can also be linked to an armed response service and/ or your neighbourhood watch network;

- \* Security lights, which are also strong crime deterrents because burglars and robbers usually prefer to operate in darkness. It is also relatively easy to rig additional outside lights with movement sensors so they will put intruders “in the spotlight” and possibly also trigger your burglar alarm.

- \* Timers on existing outdoor lights and even indoor lights so these will come on at night even if you are out or away. These handy and easy-to-use devices can also be used to turn the TV or radio on and off to give your home that lived-in look even if you don't have a “smart” home security system that you can run from your cell-phone.

- \* Another form of security system that's great for bigger properties, especially, is the infra-red perimeter beam that helps you detect intruders before they even reach the house. Such beam systems can be linked to your alarm system and will be set off when a beam is interrupted by someone passing through it.

- \* Meanwhile developments in CCTV technology mean these systems are now also widely available to homeowners and can also be linked to your cell phone so you can see and capture additional photos of intruders even if you are not at home.

You should also, Everitt says, make a checklist of what needs to be done to activate your security systems. By glancing at this each time you leave home to visit friends this summer, or set off on holiday, you can rest assured you won't miss anything.

“For added peace of mind, it's also really helpful to have good communication with your neighbours. You can agree to keep an eye on each other's property when one of you goes away, and share contact details so you can let each other know if any problem arises. Even better, you could start a neighbourhood watch organisation,” he says.

Meanwhile, something you really must do if you have recently moved or will be moving into a new home this summer is to change the locks on all the gates and outside doors. Research shows that 75% of new owners do not do this even though it represents the most basic threat to security. Just think about how many people might have keys to the front door of a 20 or 30-year old home!

“And finally, although it might seem obvious, many people need to be reminded not to put messages on their answering machines advertising the fact that they are on holiday – or to openly post pictures and updates on social media while they are away. You never know which

“friend” of a friend might take this as an invitation to drop around - and help themselves to your belongings.”

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