



7 WAYS TO KEEP YOUR PROPERTY SAFE AFTER MOVING OUT

If you're moving out while your home is still on the market, your vacant property could attract more than potential buyers—it could attract criminal activity.

An unoccupied property is at risk for a break-in, and removing all your belongings doesn't mean you're in the clear. Graffiti, damaged appliances, stolen copper wiring and broken windows can all add up to thousands of dollars in repairs.

Remember, don't forget to let a REALTOR® know your moving plans. Your agent will want to take extra precautions once your property is vacant, and to keep your investment as safe as possible, you'll have to convince passerbys the property is still occupied.

Here's how to pull it off.

1. Ask for Backup

When you're moving out, tell your immediate neighbors, the head of your neighborhood watch and your local police department that your property will be vacant. With more eyes on the house, you'll have a better chance of getting quick assistance if someone does break in.

2. Maintain the Lawn

An unkempt yard is a surefire sign a home is vacant. In the warmer months, make sure the lawn is mowed regularly, the flowerbeds are free of weeds, and there is no loose trash around the curb or driveway. In the cooler months, clean the rain gutters, rake leaves off the lawn and clear the driveway and walkway if it snows.

3. Don't Let Paper Pile Up

As soon as you're finished moving out, forward your mail and newspaper subscriptions to your new address. Ask a family member, friend or neighbor to stop by your home regularly to check for phone books, flyers and any mail that might have been accidentally delivered.

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4. Make Repairs

A few times a month, check the outside of your property for any needed repairs. If you find any obvious problems, make repairs as soon as possible. A cracked window, broken porch railing or loose shutter are small problems—but problems a live-in owner would fix.

5. Use Your Driveway

If you have a driveway attached to your home, ask a neighbor to park a car there. Many families with more than one car will be happy for the extra space, and a car parked in the driveway is a great deterrent.

6. Leave the Curtains Behind

If at all possible, leave the curtains or blinds on the windows in the home when you're moving out. Keep the curtains drawn and the blinds closed, even at the back of the house, in case a potential vandal hops your fence to see what's inside.

7. Keep the Lights On

Purchase lighting timers, connect to inexpensive lamps and place the devices strategically throughout the house. Set the timers to go on and off in different rooms at the appropriate times of day or night. Some would-be thieves or vandals will watch a property for days before breaking in. If they see lights in different rooms, they'll assume the property still is occupied.

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