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# Opinions

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## AAA: Keep burglars at bay when you're away

AAA reminds travelers to safeguard homes before vacations

By AAA of Western and Central New York

2023 summer travel is setting new records. Take, for example, AAA's projection of 50.7 million Independence Day travelers or TSA's record passenger counts that were recently reported at U.S. airports. For vacations near or far, AAA is sharing tips with travelers to keep homes safe while they're away.

According to the FBI, home burglaries increase in the summer months, since burglars see vacations as an opportunity to target empty homes, and renters are more likely to be robbed than homeowners. Before heading out for vacation, travelers should take a few moments to safeguard their home and their possessions. AAA suggests taking these steps:

✓ Make it time-consuming to break into your home. Research suggests that, if burglars think it will take more than four or five minutes to break into a home, they will move on. Check outside doors and frames to ensure they are strong and made of metal or thick hardwood. Use dead-bolts on windows and doors, which can slow burglars down or deter them entirely.

✓ Invest in an effective burglar



alarm and/or exterior cameras that, when triggered, alerts you, the police, fire department and other emergency services. Check with your insurance agent about possible alarm system discounts.

✓ Disconnect computers and other electronic devices from the internet to prevent hackers from gaining access to your information. Make sure personal information on your computer is difficult to access.

✓ Keep valuables locked up and out of sight. Expensive jewelry, electronic devices and other high-

value items should be hidden from plain view and placed in lock boxes.

✓ Make your home look inhabited. Use timers to turn lights on and off, temporarily stop newspaper deliveries, and arrange to have your mail picked up or held by the post office. An unkempt lawn is also an indicator to burglars that you are away. Hire a lawn service to maintain your yard if you will be gone for an extended period of time.

✓ Ask a dependable neighbor, friend or family member to keep

an eye on your home while you're away.

✓ Avoid discussing your vacation plans in public places such as at the grocery store or at your local café. Although vacations are exciting, try not to post about them on social media; someone may see your posts and target your home while you're away.

✓ Create a home inventory. In the event that you do need to file a claim, preparing a home inventory of your possessions beforehand will make the process easier.

✓ Check your insurance policy to ensure that you have the coverage you need in case you experience theft or damage to your property.

To find out more about renters or homeowners insurance, call AAA to see what discounts you may be eligible for and what type of coverage you might need.

As upstate New York's largest member services organization, AAA Western and Central New York provides more than 862,000 members with travel, insurance, financial and automotive-related services. Since its founding in 1900, AAA has been a leading advocate for the safety and security of all travelers. Visit AAA at www.AAA.com.

## Summertime energy-efficiency tips to help you beat the heat & stay safe this summer

Guest Editorial and Photo by National Grid

As temperatures rise, staying cool means being comfortable and healthy. National Grid is offering summertime energy-efficiency tips and payment options to help our customers stay safe and save money on their bills.

"Saving money on your energy bills is as simple as adjusting your thermostat or running fans along with your air conditioning to distribute the cooler air in a room," said Melanie Littlejohn, National Grid vice president of customer and community engagement.

Taking steps like raising your thermostat one degree or keeping curtains drawn during the sunniest parts of the day can create measurable savings on your monthly energy bill. For our most economically vulnerable customers, summer cooling assistance programs provide additional support to man-

age their energy costs.

"There are a number of other low- and no-cost steps our customers can take to reduce their energy usage and save money, as well as programs to assist those who need a little extra help during the summer months," Littlejohn said.

### Beat the Heat With Energy Efficiency

Simple energy-efficiency steps can also reduce your energy usage. Closing window drapes and blinds during the day can block the sun's light and heat into your home. Running fans along with your air conditioning creates a wind-chill effect by distributing and circulating cold air throughout a room, allowing you to turn up your thermostat. Changing or cleaning the reusable filter in your air conditioner can improve air flow and efficiency.

National Grid recommends the following actions to make your

home more energy efficient:

✓ **Have your central air conditioner checked.** Just like you have your furnace serviced and cleaned each fall, you should have your central air conditioning system checked prior to summer. Professionals will perform a comprehensive examination on your outside condenser and inside fan to ensure your system is working at peak efficiency.

✓ **Replace your air filter.** Dirty air filters on central and room air conditioning systems can choke off the flow of air to your home's ventilation system. Changing your filter as directed by the manufacturer not only permits air to flow freely, but it helps your air-conditioning run more efficiently.

✓ **Vacuum your air intake vents and keep them clear.** Dust builds up on your home's air returns. A couple of minutes with a

vacuum can keep the air flow moving. Move toys, furniture and other objects away from the intake vent to keep air moving.

✓ **Consider rearranging furniture near your thermostat or room air conditioner.** Lamps and televisions radiate heat and, if they are too close to the thermostat, your air conditioning could run more and longer than necessary to cool a room.

✓ **Replace incandescent light bulbs with LED bulbs.** Incandescent light bulbs are inefficient to use and emit more heat than an LED bulb. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, LED bulbs use at least 75% less energy and last up to 25 times longer than incandescent lighting.

✓ **Turn off lights when you're not using them.** This can help save money by reducing your

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