

LEAVING YOUR HOME CHECKLIST

During April and May of each year, friends and neighbors head out for the summer. The Architecture Committee has put together some tips for leaving your Tucson home that will help make your stay away worry-free:

1. ELECTRICAL AND COMMUNICATIONS.

- Pull the plug on any appliances, entertainment components, home office equipment, etc., that you don't need left on while you're gone. Monsoon lightning can cause surges and power outages that can damage connected electrical items. For things you must leave on, use a surge protector (very inexpensive insurance)!
- Make sure your ceiling fans are off -- both inside and outside and open all the interior doors to maintain air circulation.
- Set home phone to call forwarding to your cell phone (or summer home).

2. HEATING, COOLING, COOKING AND PLUMBING.

- Set your thermostat at a much higher temperature (90 degrees is common). Excessive heat may deteriorate or damage pictures on the wall, art items, wine stocks, fine furnishings, and other items.
- Air conditioning can also help reduce moisture buildup during monsoons. It's also a good idea to have your air-conditioning system checked by a contractor before you leave for months at a time, or at least shortly before summer and winter begin.
- If you use natural gas for cooking, heating, or pool heating and are considering having the gas company turn off the service while you're gone, remember that if you return on a weekend you won't be able to restore service until the following week.
- Ensure that your sink, shower, and bathtub drains and toilets are working properly. Turn the water heater off or at the very least, set it to vacation setting.
- Open appliance doors (dishwasher, washer, dryer, any other appliance that seals). Putting some vegetable oil in your garbage disposal and dishwasher drain area will help to protect the seals.
- Close all blinds, drapes, and shutters to reduce heat entry from outside.
- To keep wax from flowing on furnishings, collect candles and put them in an inexpensive foam cooler.

3. DRIP SYSTEMS.

- IF YOU DON'T NEED WATER FOR DRIP WATERING OR OTHER SYSTEMS, turn off the main water valve and then run remaining water from the faucets, shower head extensions, and garden hoses, and flush the toilets only once (to empty water in the tank but leave water in the bowl/trap to keep out sewer gases).

4. SECURITY.

- Unplug the garage door opener for security.
- Ask a trusted neighbor or "house watcher" to regularly remove any other items left on your driveway or front door and do recurring walk-arounds to check your home for leaks, deterioration, damage, and landscape problems (especially after a monsoon storm).
- If you leave drip irrigation on, your "house watcher" should also keep an eye out for obvious standing or pooling water. Lines can crack and break and desert pack rats love to chew on them too!
- If you leave a key with a trusted friend or "house watcher", have them check the inside. Be sure to leave contact numbers that include alternate friends or family members to contact in case you are unavailable when there's a problem. And absolutely don't forget to leave a list of contractors you want to deal with any critical home maintenance and repair problems that come up (electrical, plumbing, cooling/heating, structural, landscape, windows, etc.). Also, make it clear whether your "home watcher" is authorized to call contractors in an urgent or emergency situation OR if you always require a call first.
- If you let friends and relatives use your home for vacation stays, be sure to instruct them how to open up and then close up again when they leave. (You can give them this checklist with your special notes on it.).
- Stop newspaper and forward mail deliveries. Stacked papers outside or a full mailbox may attract unwanted attention.