



Keep your home safe for Christmas

By ANN MURPHY

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HOME owners are being warned to take extra care of their homes in the run up to Christmas.

Security firm Top Security has issued ten key measures to prevent people's houses being targeted by thieves:

1. For any outdoor Christmas lights, have an electrician install an outside socket rather than feeding extension chords through open windows or doors. Burglars will look for unlocked doors and windows before resorting to forced entry.
2. Don't place your Christmas tree by a window for all to see. Burglars are opportunists and this is an open invitation for them to check out 'the goods'. Wait until the last minute to place gifts under the tree and after the big day break down gift boxes and conceal them in black bin liners in the bin. Never pile up empty boxes from gifts outside because burglars can then see that you received a new computer or DVD player.
3. Don't post your family name on your mailbox or on your house. A criminal can call directory enquiries to get your telephone number and call your home while outside your house to confirm that you are away.
4. Don't leave descriptive telephone answering machine messages like, "we're away for the

Christmas holidays, please leave a message." Criminals love to hear they have plenty of time to break in and steal from your home.

5. If heading out to visit relatives or to do some more shopping, create the illusion that someone is at home by leaving a radio or TV on. Light timers are a great deterrent as well.

6. If going away for Christmas, do not hide the spare key under flower-pots or on top of door ledges as even a novice burglar will check out these 'hiding spots'. If you are leaving a key for use in an emergency, give it to a trusted neighbour or a relative. Ask that person to check on your house while you are away and collect any mail.

7. Check that all doors have strong locks and that any sliding doors are secured.

8. Always activate your alarm at night, even when you are in the house as this will increase your safety and security.

9. Consider a monitored alarm system as this is one of the most cost-effective and easy-to-manage deterrents.

10. If your alarm is monitored and you are going on holidays, be sure to inform your alarm monitoring company of the new temporary key holder.

Security firm Top Security has issued ten key measures to prevent people's houses being targeted by thieves over the Christmas holiday period