

Cheeky burglars holiday in home before ransacking it

Auckland, 22 March 2017 – Burglars are becoming more brazen, not only stealing from empty homes but holidaying in them too, says AA Insurance.

“One AA Insurance customer returned from holiday to find burglars had forced a window next to the front door to gain access to their home,” explained Amelia Macandrew, Customer Relations Manager, AA Insurance. “Astonishingly the burglars then look to have had their own mini holiday at the inner city property for several days. Before departing they ransacked the house, vandalised the curtains and blinds, bled over an expensive rug, and stole a significant number of items including jewellery, electronics, tools and firearms. Our customer’s contents claim was covered for \$60,000.

“While these types of brazen burglary cases are rare, it can be a traumatic experience for homeowners, so it was important for us to get their claim sorted as quickly as possible and they could get on with their lives,” she says. “For others, the timing of the event can be additionally devastating.”

Another customer’s home was burgled on Christmas Day. She had been away for only a few days prior and had asked a friend to visit so as to feed the animals. While there on Christmas Day, the friend discovered that burglars had gained access to the home by breaking the ranch slider, as well as forcing entry into the garage. Almost \$16,000 worth of items were stolen, including tools, electronics, bikes, outdoor items, clothing and jewellery.

According to the latest AA Insurance Home Security Survey, one third of Kiwis have experienced a break-in or burglary, with a reported 22% happening while homeowners were away on holiday or a long weekend.

“It’s been interesting to note that there have been 30% fewer burglary and theft claims over the 12 month period ending January 2017 than the previous year, yet the total amount paid has stayed the same at around \$8million,” continued Amelia. “It may be that Kiwis have more expensive items in their homes, or that burglars are becoming pickier.”

While the most prolific months for burglaries can vary year on year, AA Insurance tended to see more claims during the first few months such during Christmas break, long weekends and public holidays, she says.

“So, as Easter draws near, we encourage Kiwis to consider their security options now, whether they are away the entire time or only popping out for the afternoon.

“Thieves are generally opportunistic and will choose the easiest target,” she says. “So an alarm and deadlocks on doors and windows may be just the deterrent to make them think twice before breaking into your home. They can’t always keep the burglar out, but they can put a limit on what they take and how long they have undetected access to your home.”

Tips to reduce your burglary risk:

1. There are a wide range of security options to help protect your home that often complement each other, such as alarms, security lights, and deadlocks on doors and windows. But they’ll only work if you use them – even if you aren’t out for long.
2. Let your neighbours know what to do if your alarm is triggered, even by accident, and be sure you know what to do if theirs activates. Rather than approaching a thief, call the police or, if it’s safe to do so, gather information like a description of the culprit and a licence plate number to help them track the offender.
3. Make sure your valuables, including TVs and stereos, cannot be seen from the outside of your home, and your jewellery is well hidden.
4. Make it difficult for someone to break into your home – lock your shed, put away your tools and wheelie bins, and trim trees and shrubs so there are no places for burglars to hide.
5. If you’re out the back of your house don’t leave windows or doors open at the front.
6. Let your neighbours know if you’re going to be away, give them your contact phone number, and ask them to clear your mail, put washing on the line, or park in your driveway.
7. Be careful when disposing of any tell-tale packaging for TVs, gaming consoles and new purchases.
8. Look after your house and car keys, by keeping them away from your front door, and not putting personal details on them like your name, number or address.

* In 2016, AA Insurance surveyed regular Kiwis aged 18 years or over about their home security. The maximum margin of error on the total sample of n=1,100 is plus or minus 3.0 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

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About AA Insurance

AA Insurance has demonstrated trusted expertise in home, contents, and car insurance in New Zealand since launching in 1994. We're a joint venture between New Zealand Automobile Association and Suncorp Group, and we employ over 650 staff – who are all based in New Zealand – to look after more than 345,000 customers and 650,000 policies.

We proudly support youth charity Blue Light, and the NRL Telstra Premiership and Holden Cup referees in New Zealand, and have been consistently recognised by: Reader's Digest Most Trusted Brands (since 2011), NZ Insurance Industry Awards (since 2012), IBM Kenexa Best Workplaces Survey (since 2008), Canstar Blue Most Satisfied Customers (2011-2016), and the Colmar Brunton Corporate Reputation Index (since 2015) that recognises New Zealand's most successful companies.

AA Insurance has an A+ (Strong) Insurer Financial Strength Rating given by Standard and Poor's (Australia) Pty Ltd. For further information visit www.aainsurance.co.nz.

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