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## **PRESS RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **PUTNAM COUNTY, TN - Top 10 Tips To Keep Your Home Safe This Holiday Season**

Whether you're traveling this holiday season or just out visiting family and friends, the Putnam County Sheriff's Office in conjunction with the National Crime Prevention Council offers the following tips for protecting your home this holiday season:

#### **1. Lock doors and windows**

- Lock all doors at night and every time you leave the house.
- Every window and sliding door has a working key lock or is securely pinned.
- Secure windows and sliding doors with secondary blocking devices (i.e a stick or wood)
- Use anti-lift devices to prevent windows and glass doors from being lifted out.

#### **2. Crime-proof outside areas**

- Lighting is one of the most cost-effective deterrents to burglary.
- Keep yard, porch, garage doors, pathways and entrances well-lit at night.
- Consider motion detecting lights which turn on automatically as someone approaches.
- Trim plants and shrubs that could serve as hiding places for criminals.
- Cut back tree limbs that could help thieves climb into windows
- Consider light timers for exterior lighting to establish a routine and appearance of occupancy.

#### **3. Get to know your neighbors**

- Get to know your neighbors on each side of your home and across the street.
- Invite them into your home, communicate often, and establish trust.
- Ask neighbors to pick up mail and park in your driveway to give the appearance of occupancy while on vacation.
- Get to know each other's schedules so you can spot an unusual pattern.

#### **4. Consider an alarm**

- Display alarm company signs and decals on the windows and lawn; burglars will usually bypass a property with visible alarm signs.
- Don't write your alarm passcode on or near the alarm keypad.
- Alarms systems monitor for fire as well as burglary.
- Learn how to use your system properly!

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## **5. Protect yourself with lock and key**

- Don't hide keys. Leave a key with a trusted family member, friend or neighbor.
- Keep a list of everyone you give a copy of your keys to.
- Consider keys with protection against unauthorized duplication (i.e patent protected)
- All entryways should have a sturdy deadbolt lock installed into the frame of the door.
- Use high quality Grade-1 or Grade-2 locks with a bolt that extends at least one inch to resist prying open or forceful entry
- Hardened steel inserts prevents bolts from being sawed off.

## **6. Protect your home when traveling**

- Activate the alarm system (if you have one).
- Inform a trusted neighbor of your travel plans and ask them to collect mail and watch your home while away.
- Consider using automatic timers to switch interior lights on and off at preset times. Indoor lighting gives the impression of occupancy.
- For extended absences, consider hiring a trusted house-sitter.
- Don't advertise your absence. Never leave a message on your answering machine that tells thieves you are away.

## **7. Protect your valuables**

- Gate latches, garage doors, and shed doors are all locked with high-security, laminated padlocks.
- Grills, bicycles and other valuables left out in the open should be hidden from view with a tarp and securely locked to a stationary point.
- Keep an inventory of valuables including serial numbers, pictures, and sale receipts. Keep a complete copy somewhere out of the house.

## **8. Teach home safety to your kids**

- Show them how to use the door and window locks, and the alarm system.
- Never let them allow anyone into your home without asking your permission.
- Never let a caller at the door or on the phone know that they're alone. Teach them to say "Mom can't come to the phone (or door) right now."
- Be sure they carry a house key with them in a safe place. Don't leave it under a mat or on a ledge outside the house.
- Be sure they know how to call 9-1-1, your area's emergency number, or the operator.

## **9. Have an emergency plan**

- Have important phone numbers, including police and fire departments, by the phone.
- Establish a meeting place for family members; one place near your home and one outside your neighborhood.
- If something looks questionable - a slit screen, a broken window or an open door - don't go in. Call the police.
- If you think you hear someone breaking in, leave safely if you can, then call the police. If you can't leave, lock yourself in a room with a phone and call the police.

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## **10. Take a stand!**

- Join a Neighborhood Watch group. If one doesn't exist, you can start one with help from local law enforcement.
- Work with neighbors and local government to organize community clean-ups. The cleaner your neighborhood, the less attractive it is to crime.
- Join neighbors, police, school officials, and civic groups in identifying, discussing, and solving (or get help to solve) troubling conditions in your community.

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