

Closing Your Home for Extended Periods

If you plan to leave your home unoccupied for an extended period, particularly during Florida's hot and humid summers, there are some precautions you should observe. The following checklist should help you in planning for your absence as well as for a more pleasant return.

Kitchen

- Remove ALL perishable items from pantry and cabinets. Any food that is not in unopened, air-tight containers should be discarded, given away, or stored in the (running) refrigerator to prevent pest infestations.
- Wash and dry thoroughly dirty linens, and discard used sponges to avoid mold growth.
- Run and thoroughly flush garbage disposal. To freshen, flush with ice cubes and lemon juice.
- Clean sinks and wash counters, table-tops and floors.
- Run the dishwasher. A little water should remain in the bottom to prevent cracking of the rubber seal.
- Clean other appliances such as the oven and microwave.
- If refrigerator is to be disconnected, leave doors ajar and clean the interior.
- Remove all trash and clean trash containers.

Bathroom

- Clean surfaces and fixtures, adding a small amount of chlorine bleach to the water in the toilet. First Watch will clean, flush and add bleach as needed during our visits. Or, if you prefer, cover the cleaned toilet bowl with plastic wrap.
- Close plugs on drains.

Closets

- Leave only clean clothing, shoes, or other items, with space for air circulation between.
- Wire hangers are not recommended due to possibility of rust. Remove any plastic wrapping.
- Leave closet doors open.

Other Rooms

- Clean furniture, particularly behind and beneath sofa cushions.
- Clean bedding and other linens. Vacuum mattress and cover lightly with a sheet.
- Clean lint screen in clothes dryer.
- Unplug electronics to prevent power surge or storm damage.
- Turn off the breaker to the water heater.
- Turn off the water, unless it is needed for irrigation.
- Throw the deadbolt on the garage door.
- Schedule a checkup for the air conditioning system and leave the air conditioning on for humidity control.

Exterior

- Examine and repair any roof damage.
- Clean gutters.
- Caulk any gaps or cracks between windows and walls.

Miscellaneous

- To improve security, set curtains or blinds so that the home will appear occupied.
- Arrange for mail, flyers or postings to be removed.
- Consider not disconnecting your telephone, so that messages from callers can be checked and your answering machine message can be changed periodically.
- Use a timer for some interior lights.
- Lock all doors and windows.