



4 Essential Steps for Protecting Your Vacant Property

For vacant building owners, it can be easy to assume your property is a quiet, uneventful environment posing little to no risks. However, this assumption can lead to your property becoming an enticing and viable location for temporary shelter, theft, vandalism or other illicit activities. These exposures can result in accidents on the premises and significant property damage over time. To keep your vacant property safe, secure and free of damage, follow our four essential steps below.

1. Regularly Survey and Maintain the Premises

- ▶ The faster you discover potential problems, the faster you can mitigate damage and prevent further loss
- ▶ Perform regular inspections of the building's interior and exterior by personally checking in or hiring a property manager
- ▶ Regular inspection and maintenance allow you to spot and repair issues, such as pipe leakage, debris buildup and weather damage, before they become costly problems
- ▶ The consistent presence of someone at your property also helps to deter criminal activity and the possibility of trespassers taking shelter at your location

2. Secure All Entries, and Install Alarm Systems

- ▶ Always ensure all windows (including those you may think are out of reach) and exterior doors are properly locked and secured
- ▶ Consider installing a traditional home security system that includes camera surveillance; these systems are extremely effective at deterring potential break-ins and can quickly alert you of unanticipated events at your property
- ▶ By installing a central station alarm system at your location, your system will alert authorities if a forced entry occurs so they can quickly respond to the scene
 - A central station alarm system can also be connected to smoke detectors that alert authorities to fires in the building; this added measure can make the difference between a partial loss and a total loss by creating a shorter fire department response time



3. Install Motion-sensitive Exterior lighting

- ▶ Maintaining a well-lit property can help protect your building and its contents
 - Most burglaries or break-ins are a result of opportunity, not planning
 - Motion-activated lighting should be installed at entryways and walkways
 - Lighted walkways will prevent a trip and fall hazard
 - Motion-activated lights at points of entry are perfect for catching trespassers off guard, and they will often scare them away
- ▶ Consider adding interior lights on a timer in rooms facing the street, but close existing blinds or curtains so onlookers can't tell if someone is home



It is especially important to install alarm systems and exterior lighting at newly renovated homes listed for sale, as these vacant properties are common targets for break-ins. Realty sites will typically show photos of a home's interior and proudly advertise any brand new appliances and fixtures that have been installed.

4. Install and Maintain a Fire Protection System

- ▶ Empty buildings have an increased risk of fire loss, so having adequate fire safety protection in place is critical
 - Installing a fire protection system within the building will help to swiftly detect a fire and reduce structural damage. Many systems will also alert authorities
 - Ensuring the fire protection system is active and functional is key in preventing a loss
- ▶ Implement a system to monitor electrical shorts and pest infestations that result in damaged wiring to prevent the likelihood of an electrical fire