



Watch out for the neighbours these holidays – AA Insurance

AA Insurance, Auckland – 17 December 2009 – The Christmas season traditionally brings another spike in home burglaries, but AA Insurance hopes that more neighbourly co-operation and communication will keep thieves at bay these holidays.

The 2009 AA Insurance Home Index asked what steps people think most effective at keeping their homes safe when they're away. The most popular measure at 32 percent is asking someone to collect their mail and keep an eye on the house, up from 20 percent last year. Usefully, 86 percent said they know the names of their neighbours. Of those who had experienced a break-in, 83 percent warned their neighbours afterwards about it.

AA Insurance's average claim amount for a home burglary is about \$4,000, based on claims data from September 2007 to September 2009.

"With that much at stake it's worth taking steps to protect your property," says Martin Fox, Deputy General Manager, AA Insurance. "There's no doubt that good neighbourly communication can help reduce property crime – and talking to the neighbours is free!"

"Let your neighbours know when you're going to be away, ask them to collect the mail and keep an eye on the place, and let one another and the police know if you see suspicious behaviour," says Martin. "If you have an alarm system, it may be worth adding a trusted neighbour to the call list, especially if the neighbour is often at home and will hear your alarm anyway. And make sure you have each other's mobile phone numbers."

The AA Insurance Home Security Index also identified other trusted measures against burglary including arranging a house sitter (25 percent), activating an alarm (24

percent), automatically activating devices like lights, television or radio (12 percent), and leaving a light on in the house (6 percent).

Burglaries on the rise

“In August 2009 we saw the biggest spike in burglaries in five years with more than twice what we would regularly expect,” says Martin. “As these recent home claims demonstrate, we’re seeing a trend in real brazenness from burglars, so we’re advising people to report any suspicious behaviour to the police – and keep talking to the neighbours about what’s going on.”

- A man was driving home down his shared driveway when he met another car travelling the opposite direction. He pulled over to let the other car through, smiling at the unfamiliar driver. He got home to realise that he had just waved at the burglar driving off with his belongings. Unfortunately by the time he realised what had happened the burglar had driven off and the opportunity to take the thief’s number plate had passed.
- A woman was cleaning upstairs when she heard noises downstairs. A thief had entered her unlocked front door and was loading a pillow case with her belongings. She chased him out and called the police immediately.
- A woman was gardening behind her house and had the front and back doors open airing out the house. A thief walked into her house and stole her handbag and keys.

Security measures

Asked what security measures people actually have in their home, 28 percent of respondents said deadlocked external doors, 22 percent said window locks, 22 percent said an alarm, 10 percent said a safe or secure area for storing valuables and 7 percent said a peephole at the front door. However, 8 percent of those surveyed had none of these security measures.

There has been a decrease in the number of people who said they have left house keys in obvious places such as under doormats and pot plants, down from 26 percent in 2008 to 19 percent in 2009. However, more people say they've left the doors unlocked when they should have been locked, up to 43 percent in 2009 from 35 percent in 2008.

Some 70 percent of respondents say they always leave lights or the television on when going out at night, and 69 percent say their answerphone does not indicate when the house is vacant. And while 48 percent of those surveyed say they are apprehensive when going away on holiday because of the possibility of burglary, there's a low level of confidence in setting alarms. Some 45 percent say they sometimes go out without turning the alarm on, and 39 percent say they don't investigate or call the police when they hear a home alarm going off.

Burglary claims by city

Auckland Central accounts for over a quarter of all burglary claims received by AA Insurance. The top ten cities account for over 60 percent of all contents claims lodged with AA Insurance. Ranked in order of claims per hundred contents policies, they are:

1. Auckland Central
2. Auckland South and East
3. Hamilton
4. Rotorua
5. Wanganui
6. Te Awamutu
7. Palmerston North
8. Christchurch
9. Marton/Dannevirke
10. Gisborne

ENDS

About AA Insurance

AA Insurance was launched in 1994 and is a joint venture between New Zealand Automobile Association and Suncorp-Metway Limited.

AA Insurance has over 300 staff servicing 150,000 plus customers and manages over 300,000 policies. Over half of those policies cover motor insurance risks including cars, bikes, caravans and motor homes, and the remainder are house and contents insurance.

In 2008, AA Insurance was a finalist in the unlimited/JRA Best Places to Work Survey in the medium-large workplace category, making it one of the top places to work in New Zealand.

AA Insurance Limited has an A+ (Strong) Insurer Financial Strength Rating given by Standard and Poor's (Australia) Pty Ltd on 8 January 2009. For further information visit www.aainsurance.co.nz.

About the 2009 AA Insurance Home Index

The 2009 AA Insurance Home Security Index is an independent internet survey of 2,710 people aged 18 to 65 from around New Zealand.

For more information please contact:

Kate Webby, Botica Butler Raudon Partners, (09) 303 3862, 021 403 503 or email katew@botica.co.nz