

## Don't Let Holiday Grinches Ruin the Joy of the Season; Protect Yourself and Your Home from Holiday Burglaries

LOS ANGELES, Dec. 15, 2010 /PRNewswire/ -- 'Tis the season to enjoy the company of family, friends and loved ones. It's also the season of exchanging gifts – going out to get those special gifts for spouses, children and grand-children and receiving "that special something" you've been eyeing for some time.

(Logo: <http://photos.prnewswire.com/prnh/20080605/LATH062>)

Whether you've already begun to place your gifts under the tree (or are still hiding them in that "secret" place in your home), your home probably has more "highly-attractive and expensive" stuff in it than at any other time of the year. To help assure the holiday season remains joyous for you and your loved ones, now is a good time to make your list of home safety tips (and don't forget to check it twice) to make sure that grinches (or thieves) don't ruin your holidays.

"We, at Farmers Insurance, want everyone to have a safe and joy-filled holiday season," said Jeff Reinig, senior vice president of Home Product Management. "We also encourage folks to take extra precautions to secure their homes since most of us will have more 'enticing' items in our homes during this time of year."

Since many residential burglaries occur as crimes of "opportunity" – meaning they typically are committed without a great deal of planning – doing a few additional things to make your home a "harder" target to burglarize can make all the difference.

Following are some suggestions designed to reduce the possibility of becoming a victim of a holiday burglary:

- Be sure to securely lock all doors and windows when no one is home. Many burglaries occur each year through entryways that were left open or unlocked
- During this time of year, many people like to display their tree or other holiday decorations for all to see. While these are wonderful showcases to admire, it should be understood that piles of wrapped gifts on view also provide would-be thieves with "enticing" objects to consider. Placing the gifts in another, less – viewable location, may be in order
- If you will be away from your home for a few hours, take advantage of timers, not only to manage your holiday lighting, but to manage other lights or things like televisions or radios in your home, to make it seem as if someone is home
- If you will be away from home for a few days or more, ask a neighbor or a friend to watch your home, shovel your snow and park in the driveway from time to time. Also, remember to have mail and newspaper delivery stopped or have a neighbor pick it up daily. Piled up mail and newspapers are a give-away to opportunistic thieves that no one is home

While it's always a good idea to keep an updated inventory list of all of your possessions, special gifts received during this time of year – the latest flat-screen television, the high-end watch or diamond earrings, the new family video game console – should be added to the list. Take photos or make videos of items, and list descriptions and serial numbers. If your home is burglarized, having a detailed inventory can help identify stolen items and make insurance claims easier to file.

"Many people will be receiving wonderful gifts this year – including high-dollar items – which would be difficult to replace if not properly insured," said Reinig. "We want to remind everyone that keeping your insurance agent informed about your new gifts will help consumers, should an unfortunate event occur."

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