

Burglars busy 24/7, AA Insurance

Don't be complacent when leaving the house for the day

Auckland, 15 September 2014 – Burglars are nearly four times more likely to break-in to Kiwi homes when people are at work or home than while they are away on holiday, according to AA Insurance.

A recent AA Insurance Home Security Survey found that 71% of all break-ins occurred when Kiwis were away for less than a day, such as when they are at work or out shopping. The survey, which interviewed 1,000 Kiwis online, found only 17% had a break-in while they were away on holiday or a long weekend. Frighteningly, 12% were still in the house when their home was broken into.

“Our survey found that one quarter of all Kiwis had experienced a burglary,” says Amelia Macandrew, Customer Relations Manager, AA Insurance. “While the percentage of Kiwis who’ve had a break-in is similar to last year’s findings, the timing has changed: we’re now seeing 15% more burglaries happen when people are away for a day.”

“Burglary is a 24/7 business,” says Amelia. “Conventional wisdom would suggest you’re most exposed when you leave your home to go on holiday. We all know to be careful: lock everything, cancel the newspaper, have the neighbours collect the mail and so on. But when we’re just going to work or to the shops, we are much more complacent – and burglars know to take advantage of any opportunity.”

In one example, a customer had left her home for only 2.5 hours one afternoon, giving burglars enough time to jimmy open a bedroom window and steal over \$800 worth of jewellery and items, after initially trying to open the living room ranch slider and another window. Another customer was vacuuming downstairs when burglars climbed through an open upstairs bedroom window and stole her jewellery box containing a number of expensive items.

Despite burglaries remaining a concern, New Zealand Police crime statistics show a 7,200 decrease in unlawful entries, burglaries and break-ins over the past few years, with 52,247 in 2013, 52,937 in 2012, and 59,518 in 2011.

“Burglars are highly opportunistic, and will go for the easiest target, so it pays to be prepared and make sure your home isn’t easy to access. And remember, you may have dead locks and an alarm, but they will only work if you use them,” continued Amelia.

One family always kept the front door unlocked when they were home. Unfortunately this meant easy access for burglars who stole almost \$7,000 worth of property including laptops and other electronic gear, tools and clothing, while their adult daughter was at home.

Thieves thrive in Central Auckland

If you live in Central Auckland, you are more than twice as likely to be burgled as anywhere else in New Zealand. AA Insurance claims data for the past 12 months to the end of July shows the national average is 51 burglary claims, but in Central Auckland suburbs the number of home break-ins rises to over 170.

South Auckland follows close behind, with residents 85% more likely to suffer a burglary. Hamilton residents are 59% more at risk although that is down on last year, when the city had the unenviable record of most likely to be burgled.

Christchurch city residents are 21% more likely than the national average to have their home burgled. On the other hand, places such as Wellington, Bay of Plenty, Taranaki, West Coast, Marlborough, Southland and Otago are all below the national average for burglaries. And the wider Canterbury area is safest for break-ins — a home there is 76% less likely to be burgled than the national average.

Tips to reduce your burglary risk:

1. Make sure your valuables, including TVs and stereos, cannot be seen from the outside of your home.
2. Don't make it easy for someone to break into your home. Lock your garden shed and put away your tools. Set your burglar alarm if you have one and close windows when you leave the house – even if they seem impossible to reach.
3. If you're out the back of your house don't leave windows or doors at the front open, as it's easy for thieves to enter your home without you knowing and steal small items, such as your wallet or handbag. You should find a place to store your valuables away.
4. Get to know your neighbours so you are both aware of your regular hours.
5. If you'll be away for a long period tell your neighbours, leave your contact number, and ask someone to clear your mail frequently.

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About AA Insurance

AA Insurance Limited launched in 1994 and is a joint venture between the New Zealand Automobile Association and Vero New Zealand, which is part of the Suncorp Group. We employ around 580 staff to look after 320,000 customers and around 580,000 car, home and contents policies.

AA Insurance has been consistently recognised by Reader's Digest Most Trusted Brands (since 2011), NZ Direct Insurer Award (since 2012), Kenexa Best Workplaces Survey (since 2008), and Canstar Blue Most Satisfied Customers (since 2011).

We proudly support youth charity Blue Light, and the Holden Cup and NRL Telstra Premiership referees in New Zealand.

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

For more information please contact:

Arwen Vant, Botica Butler Raudon Partners, (09) 303 3862, 021 403 503 or email arwenv@botica.co.nz

Amanda Fifield, AA Insurance Limited, (09) 927 2085 or email Amanda_Fifield@aainsurance.co.nz