



Hints For Homeowners

Take Care Of Your Home Away From Home

(NAPSA)—According to the U.S. Census Bureau, more than 3.5 million housing units in the U.S. are for seasonal, recreational or occasional use—from big summer estates and time-share condos to A-frame structures and simple fishing cabins.

“That means these homes are unoccupied a good portion of the year,” says insurance expert Charles Valinotti, senior vice president, QBE Regional. He offers tips on how you can minimize property loss and damage for your home away from home:

- **Team up with your neighbors**—If there are other seasonal homes in your area, get to know the owners and exchange phone numbers. Keeping an eye on each other’s property is a good way to quickly learn about wind and hail damage—and take care of it before it gets worse. If a full-time resident isn’t nearby, consider hiring someone to periodically patrol your residence.

- **Shut off the water**—As you prepare to exit your vacation residence for the season, remember to turn off the water. Not doing so can lead to massive water damage from a burst pipe. Valinotti suggests installing an alarm system that notifies a service when water is detected or the temperature dips below a certain level. “The service will contact you, so you’ll know about problems sooner rather than later,” he says.

- **Snuff out fire hazards**—Valinotti says he’s seen several large losses as a result of portable fire pits, where ashes can smolder long after a homeowner has locked up and left.



When it’s time to say good-bye to your vacation place, be sure you’ve taken the proper precautions so you can enjoy it when you come back.

Before you vacate your vacation home, make sure coals are completely extinguished. Consider signing on with a central-station alarm company that provides services to monitor burglar and fire alarm systems.

- **Discourage break-ins**—Burglar alarm systems will summon help to vacation homes in more-populated areas but aren’t as effective for isolated cabins, which are more difficult for police to locate. Invest in high-quality dead-bolt locks and post an alarm warning as a deterrent.

Attending to these important details can go a long way to protect your investment and ensure continued enjoyment of your seasonal home.

For more information, visit www.qberegional.com.

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