

A HANDY CHECKLIST FOR THOSE HEADING NORTH

by Len Bonifield

Mobile Home Living Column

We are rapidly approaching the time when our seasonal neighbors head north. This column will provide you with suggestions and tips for making sure your Florida home is properly closed for the hot weather days ahead.

- Closing up your home properly for the summer will save you work and possibly major repairs when you return in the fall.
- Notify your neighbors and, if you live in a community, notify management. Give them your departure date and estimated return date. Ask neighbors to keep an eye on your property. Give keys to at least one neighbor so they can make checks inside for any possible problems. The house needs to be checked occasionally for leaks, infestations or burglaries. When leaving for six months or more ask a neighbor to replace your air filter at least twice during your absence, or to clean your permanent filter neighbors should check at least weekly for newspapers, circulars, directories and deliveries before they accumulate enough to suggest your home is not occupied. If a neighbor has two vehicles ask them to park one in your driveway, or to park in your drive on occasion. It helps to make your home look occupied.
- Make sure your air conditioning is working properly and in good condition. Install a new aif filter or make sure your permanent filter is clean. Set you thermostat at 85 degrees (recommended by an A?C contractor). If you have a humidistat (highly recommended by a/c contractors) set it at 60 percent. It should be in the "on" position when you are in residence.
- Irrigation system should be set with the custom settings to run on the days permitted under watering restrictions. Your system most likely has a battery backup in the event the power fails. Replace if necessary with a new one.
- Place a timer on at least one light in your home so that it cycles on and off at proper times to make the home appear occupied.
- It is strongly recommended that you have two security lights in the rear of your home triggered by motion detectors. Security lights discourage burglars.
- Place any loose foods, opened boxes or spices in plastic containers with tight lids. If you are leaving your refrigerator on, place the sealed containers inside.
- Notify the Post Office of your summer mailing address for forwarding any mail.
- Notify the telephone company when you are leaving.
- Notify you cable company of your departure.
- Clean your dishwasher thoroughly, paying attention to the edges of the door. Soak up any

residual water that might be in the bottom of the dishwasher. Prop the door open.

- Pour a cup of chlorine bleach in each toilet bowl. Cover both the bowl and the tank with plastic wrap to minimize evaporation and keep out any bugs.
- Some people like to set out containers around the interior of the house with charcoal to absorb odors and moisture. It has also been recommended to put cat litter in containers around the home for moisture and odor control.
- Check or have checked your plumbing system for leaks. Look for wet areas or water stains in your kitchen, bathroom and laundry areas. It is also a good idea to check or have checked under your home for any possible leaks.
- Clean out any leaves or debris in your gutter system.
- Inspect or have your roof inspected for any damage or leaks that might cause a potential problems.
- Unplug all electrical items, except light(s) on timers. Switch off all circuit breakers for everything except your air conditioning, security lights, irrigation system and circuit for your inside light on a timer.
- There are two philosophies on what to do with the refrigerator. One is to leave it empty, unplugged, make sure the ice maker water supply is off and prop the door open. The other philosophy is that you turn the dial to the warmest temperature setting, turning off the ice maker and filling both the freezer and refrigerator with jugs of water. Some recommend placing a dish with either charcoal or baking soda in the refrigerator to absorb odors.
- Turn off water at the main shutoff. If this is not possible due to leaving your irrigation system on, then close all shut-offs for sinks, toilet bowls and appliances. Some recommend that you not leave faucets open and not plug drains, while the other school of thought is to plug drains.
- Open all closet doors and dresser drawers. Leave no clothes on wire hangers and none in bags, unless you leave them unzipped. Rust stains and mildew are often permanent.
- Clean all floor coverings and all surfaces to ensure no food particles or stains attract bugs or cause mildew.
- Run ice cubes through your garbage disposal. Then flush with baking soda and water and follow by spraying WD-40 down it and putting the stopper in place.
- Put a small amount of cooking oil in the bottom of your dishwasher and washing machine to keep the plastic/rubber washers from drying out. Remember when you return to run both empty to clean out the oil before you load in dishes or clothes.
- Thoroughly clean all appliances. This means everything. Don't forget the toaster and range, including the oven and broiler as well as the burners and drip pans. If you have a toaster oven, make sure it is clean.

- Pull furniture away from the walls and pull out loose cushions on couches and chairs.
- Make sure all windows are closed and locked. Place security bars in sliding doors. Close all blinds, drapes, and awnings to keep out as much sun and heat as possible. Some seasonal residents will even place heavy cardboard or aluminum foil in windows and skylights.
- Some residents like to take an extra step and have a professional pest control firm spray around and under the house before the leave. Others will distribute the pesticide around the house themselves.
- Place ant traps near piping or where pipe holes exist in the flooring.
- Leather easily mildews. Keep any leather items exposed to natural air circulation; do not roll or keep in boxes.
- Place candles in your refrigerator if you leave it on.
- Have a screened room? Move any upholstered furniture into the house where it will be in the air conditioning. Cover any other furniture in the screened room. Do not leave a TV exposed to summer conditions in your screened room. If you have vinyl windows, lower a couple windows from the top one or two inches for circulation.