

# TOP 5 TIPS TO KEEP YOUR OFFICE SAFE DURING YOUR HOLIDAY GETAWAY

By Herman Yau



The holiday season is upon us — a time when many company owners and entrepreneurs put business aside temporarily to focus on family and friends. But it's not all merry-making and good cheer: Unfortunately, the holidays are also the time of year when thieves kick their activities into high gear, looking for unguarded homes and businesses to burglarize.

Crime typically spikes during the holiday season for several reasons, including the greater availability of items to steal as shoppers purchase gifts as well as increased opportunities for thieves to target unoccupied homes and businesses. If you plan to leave town for the holidays, here are some tips to help you protect your business while you're gone:

## 1. Lock up your valuables.

This may sound like common sense — and it is — but many business owners overlook obvious steps, such as locking up checkbooks and cashboxes. Make sure all cash and printed materials with bank account numbers, as well as other valuable company property, is stored in a safe or other hardened, secure area and locked.

## 2. Look for suspicious activity.

Before they strike, burglars will often surveil a target business, watching people come and go and observing daily activities to get a feel for when the building or office space will be empty. Be alert to activities in parking lots and other public areas prior to your planned break and report anything suspicious to local authorities.

## 3. Be wary of holiday solicitors.

People who are genuinely raising funds for charitable causes do a lot of good over the holidays. But thieves often take advantage of increased fundraising drives this time of year to pose as solicitors so they can enter offices, evaluate entry ways and get an idea of what kind of valuables are stored in the office. Ask to see credentials.

## 4. Use high-tech solutions to combat low-tech crime.

Burglaries of unoccupied businesses have happened for centuries, but today, business owners can fight back with affordable security solutions such as Wi-Fi-enabled, motion-detection cameras that record and stream live video to mobile phones. Night vision and two-way audio are additional security layers.

## 5. Ask neighboring business owners to keep an eye on the building or office.

Before you leave for an extended period, it's a good idea to check in with nearby business owners to let them know you'll be away from the office. If they will be open during the period you're away, ask them to let you know if they notice any suspicious activity at your business.

As entrepreneurs and business owners, we work hard to build our companies up all year long. We deserve some time away to recharge and get ready for a successful new year. But it's important to remember that crime never takes a holiday, and with all the focus lately on hacking and cybercrime incidents, it pays to remember that property crime is still a major issue.

By following these tips, you can take your well-deserved holiday getaway while making sure you've done all you can to keep your business secure in your absence. With common sense, security precautions, an awareness of heightened holiday dangers and technology tools to monitor your company property from afar, you'll be ready to enjoy the season — while keeping your business safe.