

Suncoasteam's Homeowner News™

Courtesy of Jim Mulligan & Andy Leonard ☞ www.suncoasteam.com

August 2005

Protecting Your Home During the "Busy Season"

According to the FBI, July and August are the busiest months for burglars. Maybe it's because many people go on vacations, leaving their homes empty. Or it may be because thieves need some extra money for their own vacations. Whatever the reason, the "busy season" is upon us, so we thought it would be helpful to share with you a few tips on how to keep your home safe from intruders this summer.

Every police officer will tell you that burglary is a crime of opportunity. What this means is that a thief will always look for the easiest target that presents itself. Are you ready for a shock? According to our local police department, over half of all burglaries are committed without force. This means that most thieves enter the homes of their victims through an unlocked door, an open window, or using a key! Yep, you read that right – over half! So, are you not locking the door because you will be back in "just a minute?" All a burglar needs to help himself to your possessions is "just a minute." Do you have a family member that always forgets his key, so you cleverly hide an extra one under the mat, in the mailbox, or under a fake rock? That's exactly where a thief will look first. The number one rule to keep your home safe is to not make yourself an obvious, easy target.



Assuming that you always lock your door and keep the extra key in a safe place (with a trusted neighbor, or in a metal lockbox that Realtors use), let's talk about a few other easy steps that you can take to protect yourself. Just like roaches, thieves hate light, so make sure that the exterior of your home is well lit. Installing floodlights with motion sensors around the exterior of your home is a good idea

(they keep intruders away while not using too much electricity). Pay special attention to doors and windows, as those are entry points into your home. Trim any shrubs or trees that may be obscuring them, giving the would-be

burglar a good hiding spot. If you have a dog, place Beware of Dog signs in your yard (actually, even if you don't have a dog place the signs). A few alarm company decals on your windows and the front door are also good deterrents. The idea here is for your home to raise enough red flags in a thief's mind that he gives up before even trying and moves on to look for an easier target.

If someone does try to break in, his job shouldn't be easy. Your entrance door should be made of metal or solid wood. The hollow doors, or the ones with thin wood panels, are very easy to break

(continued, Page 2)



What is our recipe for a stress-free real estate transaction? First, we make a full-time commitment to you; real estate is our passion and our only profession. Secondly, we offer you our thorough knowledge of the local market and real estate laws. And thirdly, we utilize all the modern technologies available to find you the right home (or the buyer for your home), without losing that personal touch. Throughout the process we will spend the time needed with you serving as your guides and making sure that you are confident with every step taken. Thinking of buying or selling soon? Then let's get together and talk about your plans. The consultation is always free and there is never any pressure or obligation.

Jim Mulligan & Andy Leonard

(941) 456-3034 (Jim)

(941) 662-0033 (Andy)

results@suncoasteam.com

www.suncoasteam.com



Prudential

Contingencies Explained

“Contingency” is one of those words that often pop up when talking about real estate contracts. Every real estate contract contains contingencies that impact both buyers and sellers, so let’s demystify this word.

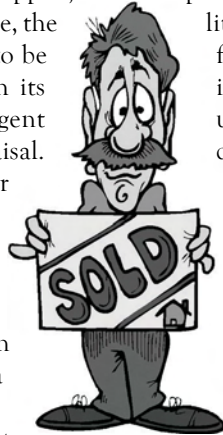
Simply put, a contingency is a condition – if A happens, then B follows; or in order for X to happen, Y must occur first. For example, the buyer (and her lender) want to be sure that a property is worth its price, so the sale is “contingent upon” (depends on) the appraisal. If the home is appraised at or above the purchase price, the sale occurs; if the appraisal comes in lower, then the contract can be cancelled or re-negotiated. This condition written into a contract is a contingency.

What are the most common contingencies? The one described above is always present when the buyer is obtaining a mortgage. Another very common one is the Financing Contingency – if the buyer is unable to obtain financing, the sale is off. Every smart buyer will also insist on an Inspection Contingency – the home must pass a property inspection, or the contract is renegotiated or cancelled. And the Title Contingency is an absolute must – the seller must deliver a clear title, or no deal.

There are a number of other contingencies that both buyers and sellers can request depending upon the particular situation. A buyer may want the contract to be “contingent” upon the sale of her current home. The seller may want the contract to be “contingent” upon the buyer proving her creditworthiness. Whatever the case may be, properly written contingencies help both parties understand and anticipate certain events in the transaction, and outline rules for how those events will be handled.

So what are the elements of a proper contingency? First and foremost, it must be written into the contract. Handshakes and verbal promises are hard, if not impossible, to enforce. Secondly, it must be very specific. For example, simply writing that the “Sale is contingent upon a property inspection” means very little. How much time is allowed for the inspection? Who pays for it? What happens if some unsatisfactory condition is discovered? How much time do the buyer and seller have to agree on the solution? The details must be spelled out in the contract, and a clear timeline agreed upon, in order to avoid confusion and potential legal problems.

And how do you know what contingencies should be in the contract and how they should be worded? Ask your Realtor. That’s exactly what we are trained for – to know how to properly put the contract together to make sure that your interests are protected. A good agent will listen to your needs and concerns, then ensure that all the necessary contingencies are written into the contract. Oh, and a good agent will also be able to explain them to you in plain English.



(continued from Page 1)
through. Make sure that the door is installed so that the hinges are located inside your home, thus preventing burglars from simply removing the door in its entirety. A deadbolt lock is another good form of protection. The metal bolt should extend at least one inch into the doorframe, and the screws that hold the lock together should be inside the door. Don’t forget to secure the windows and sliding patio doors! For double-hung windows, inserting a metal bar in the track is a good way to prevent them from opening. For sliding doors, a simple broomstick in the tracks can do the job. Keep in mind though, that sliding doors can be easily lifted and removed; to prevent this, drill a few small holes from the inside in the upper track, then insert a few screws or nails. Leave enough room for the door to slide, but not enough to lift it. True, this will not stop a super-determined intruder, but if he really wants to get in he will have to break some glass and risk being heard.

If you plan on leaving your home for an extended period of time, a few extra precautions are needed. Stop newspaper deliveries, and have a trusted neighbor pick up your mail (so that it does not accumulate in your mailbox). Have someone mow your lawn regularly (an unkempt lawn, other than being an eyesore, is a dead giveaway that the home is empty). Ask your neighbor to park her car in your driveway so that it looks like someone is staying in the home overnight. Another good idea — install timers for your interior lights and program them to randomly turn the lights on and off to further throw off a would be intruder.

Finally, teams can accomplish a lot more than individuals. What is the

(continued, Page 3)

Free Special Report Available

The Seven Expensive Mistakes Sellers Frequently Make is a four-page special report that no seller should be without. If you are thinking of selling a home soon, arm yourself with the knowledge that can help you avoid expensive mistakes too many people have made. Request this report today – there is no cost or obligation.

(941) 456-3034

results@suncoasteam.com

Cooking With the Internet

Having friends over for dinner and don't know what to make? Want to surprise your family with a unique dish? Here are a few cool places on the Net where you can find the inspiration for your next cooking adventure:

Epicurious.com

The largest and arguably the most popular recipe collection on the Internet boasts thousands of food and drink recipes. Members rate each recipe from one to four forks (instead of stars), and include their own comments and recipe variations. A number of cooking forums are also available, as well as special features on improving your cooking techniques.

Cool feature: A Recipe Box allows you to save interesting recipes for future reference.

CopyKat.com

Its non-unique recipes make this a very unique site. CopyKat.com offers a collection of recipes for dishes of many popular restaurants. Want to know how to make Olive Garden's Sicilian Scampi? Or Chili's Margarita Grilled Chicken? Visit this unique non-unique site and find out how.

Cool Feature: McDonald's secret sauce revealed!

FoodTV.com

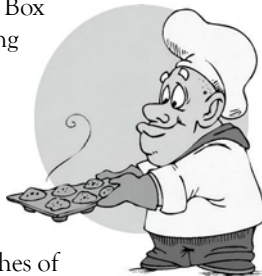
A rich source of recipes, party ideas, cooking tips, and special features make this a great site for cooks of all skill levels. If you are a fan of their TV channel, you'll like it even more.

Cool feature: Watch videos of celebrity chefs preparing their favorite dishes.

CookingLight.com

As its name suggests, this site is all about healthy cooking. What makes it interesting though, is that it contains recipes for many popular dishes prepared in a healthy way, rather than being just a collection of healthy, but tasteless food.

Cool feature: It contains flavor profiles that explain what many spices and flavors are and what they are used with; also nutrition information is available for each dish.



BettyCrocker.com

The bible of everyday cooking is now on the web! The recipes for your family favorites, meal ideas, and coupons for needed ingredients are just a few keystrokes away.

Cool feature: Enter the ingredients you've got at home and find a recipe!

RecipeSource.com

Ever wanted to try a Tibetan dish? Or Serbian? Or Native American? This site offers a great selection of recipes from around the world; from the most popular locales to the lesser known ones.

Cool feature:

Recipes are neatly organized by regions and ethnic groups.



Q: As a seller, why would I want to pay for the buyer's closing costs?

A: One of the differences between a buyer and a seller in a real estate transaction is that the buyer needs to bring money to the closing, whereas the seller walks away with money from the closing. Between the down payment and the closing costs, buyers sometimes find it challenging to come up with enough cash and still have enough left over after the closing for normal living expenses. In these instances it is a common strategy for a seller to pay some of the buyer's closing costs, thus reducing the out-of-pocket cash a buyer needs to bring to the table. This does not have to mean that the seller loses money in the process. Often the price of the home is increased by the amount that the seller has to pay, so a win-win situation is created for both parties. Two things to keep in mind though: the seller can pay only for the closing costs, not for the down payment, and if the price is increased to compensate for the seller's assistance, the home must appraise for that higher value.

Have a tough real estate question? Your calls and e-mails are always welcome:

(941) 456-3034 (Jim)
 (941) 662-0033 (Andy)
 results@suncoasteam.com

(continued from Page 2)
best crime prevention team around? The answer is you, your neighbors and your local police department. If there is a Neighborhood Watch in your area, join it. If there isn't, start one (your local police department has designated officers who can help you). Communities who have

implemented Neighborhood Watch programs report as much as a 45% decrease in crime. Being aware of what goes on in your neighborhood, neighbors looking out for each other, and reporting any suspicious activity to the police are the best ways to keep not just your own home safe, but your entire community.



August 2005

Let Andy & Jim help you find your piece of paradise... examples of available properties:

Building lots- all prices & sizes, dry & waterfront

Punta Gorda Isles waterfront home with gulf access. 10,000 lb boat lift, 4,000 lb davits, 3 bed, 2 bath, 2 car garage, eat-in kitchen with oak cabinets, fenced yard, large family room, great location. \$495,000.

Port Charlotte pool home. 3 bed, 2 bath, 2 car garage on large corner lot. Solar hot water. \$225,000.

Adult community (55+ yrs) condos from \$89,900. 2 bed, 2 bath, close to shopping, restaurants, doctors.

Venice Gardens, 1,500 s/f home, 3 bed, 2 bath, large covered patio, newer roof... \$228,900.

Burnt Store Villa, 2 bed, 2 bath, great Florida room, marina & golf community... \$282,000



Rotonda West Condo View \$144,900.00

Only 15 minutes to the beach, in a community of six golf courses and more close by, this home is an exceptional bargain. It has two bedrooms and two baths and comes fully furnished. It is tiled throughout and overlooks a scenic canal. With an amazingly low monthly maintenance fee of \$75, you can't lose!!!