

HOME

Protecting Your Home From Burglars During the Holidays

NewsUSA

(NU) - Ah, yes, the holidays. A time for celebrating with family, ripping into presents ... *and getting burglarized?*

Apparently so.

According to the FBI, nearly 400,000 burglaries occur in the U.S. during November and December each year. And the reason for that should be as obvious as the beards on "Duck Dynasty's" male stars' faces: Those are the months when so many of us are either away from home – whether on vacation or getting together with loved ones – or busy accumulating piles of shiny new gifts.

"Burglars are opportunists looking for a score, and the holidays are a perfect time for it," says Robert Siciliano, a security expert whose work with major businesses has earned him the title "the Lifesaver."

So what can you do to keep from being one of the 400,000? Read on.

- **The Perils of Social Media.** Admit it: You laughed at the stupidity of gang members outed in the news for bragging about their crimes on Facebook and Twitter. So why are you sharing your travel plans on such sites for all the world to see? *Duh.*

- **Lighting.** High-wattage exterior lighting, set on timers along with indoor lamps, help neighbors spot suspicious activity at night while giving your home what Siciliano calls "that lived-in look." Adding motion sensors, though, has a downside: "They sometimes 'ghost' and give the impression that someone is there when he isn't," he says.

- **Home Security.** Burglars, who've been known to case neigh-



Home burglaries are abundant during the holidays.

borhoods in broad daylight dressed as contractors in order to fit in, actually jiggle doorknobs in search of cheap, breakable locks. So it's essential to protect your home's main point of entry, advises Siciliano, with a strong one like the new Touchscreen Deadbolt from Schlage (www.schlage.com), the Indiana-based firm that's been creating technologically advanced security products for more than 90 years. "I like it because it offers the highest-grade residential security available, has a built-in alarm, anti-pick shield and is even easy enough to install yourself."

- **Garage Door Openers.** Unplug them when traveling, and then repeat these words: *A powerless GDO can't be hacked with a universal remote.*

Finally, about those "shiny new gifts."

Yes, the huge box your new plasma TV, say, came in is an eyesore you can't wait to put out on the curb with the trash. But guess what attracts the attention of crooks on their post-holiday prowls?

"The best thing to do," says Siciliano, "is cut the box up and put it in a big black trash bag. That way, they don't know you have a plasma TV."