

Protecting your place of business during a closure



As we all do our best to minimise the spread of COVID-19, one of the tragic outcomes is that many businesses need to close their doors for a period of time. This is never a decision made lightly as the ramifications are enormous. There are many factors to consider when doing this, such as how staff will be looked after during this time, if services can be provided online and how to communicate the closure with clients.

Another important consideration should be the protection of the property from which you operate your business. Sadly, vacant buildings can lead to an increase in thefts and burglaries as a lot of crime is opportunistic. Thieves will know that many businesses have closed only temporarily and therefore the buildings may not be empty, there may still be items worth stealing inside.

The following are some tips to consider if you are temporarily closing the physical premises of your business:

- > While you want to inform your clients about the change to the business, placing a sign on the front of the building may not be the most ideal way, especially if this will be easily visible for those walking past. If you do want to place

information on the building about a closure, don't indicate this is potentially long term or indefinite, simply provide details for clients to contact you.

- > Redirect mail to a home or post-office box and place a 'no junk mail' sign on the building's letterbox. A messy overflowing letterbox is a sure sign no one has been frequenting the premises.
- > Use a timer to have the lights turn on and off at certain periods of the day, creating a look of someone being in.
- > Electronic Security Alarms should be kept operational where fitted.
- > Consider which appliances can be turned off as many appliances continue to use power even when they aren't being used. Items to consider turning off include hot water tanks, televisions, microwaves and computers. However, be sure to think about what you're turning off before you quickly switch off all power; for example, fridges and freezers, unless empty, should be kept on.
- > It's important to conduct regular external inspections of your property to check the condition, ensuring that it's safe and there are no signs of attempted entry or vandalism. Where possible, visit

your property fortnightly, however, be sure you're complying with government COVID-19 restrictions when doing this. Maintain the external appearance by removing any rubbish and mail and keep lawns and gardens trimmed.

- > Clear out your gutters. A build-up of leaves and other debris creates a fire hazard as well as a risk of an overflow of water entering the roof space during a storm.
- > If you have a good relationship with your neighbours, let them know about your closure and be sure they have your contact details. That way if anything goes wrong or they notice anything suspicious, they can let you know.

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