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Burglary rates on the rise

AN RACV review of home security has found an alarming increase in the number of residential burglaries across many areas of Melbourne over the past year.

Carlton North fared the worst with the number of burglaries more than doubling from the previous year, up by 103 per cent.

The figures also show significant increases in the bayside suburb of Sandringham (90 per cent) the inner eastern suburb of Canterbury (84 per cent) and the outer suburbs such as Thomastown (77 per cent) and Chirnside Park (79 per cent).

Overall, burglaries increased by 1 per cent across the State – the first annual rise since 2001.

“After years of people being more vigilant, and a corresponding decline in burglary rates, we are now seeing signs of people being a bit more lax about their security,” said RACV’s General Manager, Home Security, Peter Brindley.

He said another worrying statistic was that for the second consecutive year, there had been an increase of more than 10 per cent in the number of incidents of property damage across the State.

“We know that the incidence of burglary increases over traditional holiday periods, like Christmas, which makes now the perfect time to re-assess the security in our homes,” he said.

Mr Brindley said there were three levels of crime prevention: effective law enforcement, community crime prevention, such as Neighbourhood Watch, and people taking personal ownership of their security.

Simple steps to improve home security over the holiday period include:

- checking that you have strong locks on windows and doors
 - if you have a burglar alarm, activating a security monitoring service
 - making your home look like someone is living in it. Automatic timer-switches to turn lights on and off are a good way of doing this
 - avoiding discussion of holiday plans where strangers may hear details of your absence
 - cancelling newspapers and any other regular deliveries
 - cutting the lawn and trimming back bushes before you go
 - having your mail re-directed or held at the Post Office, or asking someone to collect it
 - locking up garden tools and ladders that could be used to enter your home.
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However, Mr Brindley said that having a monitored security system was the best burglar deterrent of them all.

“A back to base alarm acts as a watchdog when you are not there by deterring would-be thieves and triggering a professional response if the alarm is activated,” he said.

“Remember to use the security you already have. Check that your doors and windows are locked and the alarm is switched on. This is important whether you are running down to the shop or going on an overseas holiday.”

Largest percentage rises in burglaries in the Melbourne Metropolitan area.

Postcode	Suburb	Increase
3054	Carlton North	103%
3191	Sandringham	90%
3126	Canterbury	84%
3109	Doncaster East	83%
3116	Chirnside Park	79%
3053	Carlton South	78%
3074	Thomastown	77%
3111	Donvale	77%
3166	Oakleigh/Hughesdale/Huntingdale	67%
3207	Port Melbourne	66%

Source: Victoria Police Crime Statistics, 2005-6 & 2006-07, Residential Burglaries by postcode.
Excludes postcodes with less than 25 burglaries.

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