

POLICE WARNINGS AHEAD OF EASTER LONG WEEKENDS

It is that time of the year when most people will be travelling to all directions of the islands either for purposes of Easter camp, worship, holiday or to check on their relatives and friends as part of the Easter holidays.

The Vanuatu Police Force (VPF) takes this opportunity to wish all citizens and visitors of the Vanuatu an exciting, regenerating and safe Easter holidays. However, the VPF's interest is more on ensuring safety and security of the people and their residences while away. The VPF will again conduct a Zero Tolerance this Easter weekend and will be out making an effort to ensure the motor ways and the streets are safe. The VPF will be ready to respond to any call out during the long Easter weekend but the fact is they can only do so much. The onus is on you, your safety and your properties. Property occupier or owner is advised to meet the VPF halfway by performing your role in order to make their work easier. Again Prevention is indeed better than cure. The VPF challenges you, dear residents, to help prevent crime in your vibrant communities these Easter holidays by doing the following:

1. GET SOMEONE TO GUARD YOUR HOUSE

It is important that you leave someone to guard your property while you are away. Thieves think twice before pouncing on a property when there is someone left to guard it. This is important even when you will only be away a couple of hours during the day. Recent statistics show that thieves nowadays do not wait for the night but break into houses in broad daylight particularly when there is no one left to guard them.

2. DON'T LEAVE GARDEN TOOLS IN THE YARD

Residents sometimes contribute to the occurrence of crime in their properties either through ignorance or negligence. The tendency of leaving garden tools idle in the yard contributes to the occurrence of crime. Those hoes, axes, garden rakes, spades, crowbars etc. are the very tools that thieves utilise to break into houses. By leaving them in the yard you are only making their (thieves') work easier. Keep all tools in a safe and securely locked storeroom.

3. DARKNESS AND THIEVES THE BEST OF BUDDIES

Ascertain that there is enough lighting in and around your residence. Thieves find comfort in shades of darkness. It is also advisable to ensure that overgrowth in your yard is always maintained so that it does not become a hideout for criminals. A special plea is extended to owners of vacant plots to clear overgrowth in their properties as soon as possible. You do not want to be held liable for a break-in in your neighbour's property.

4. IF YOU CAN AFFORD, PLEASE ENGAGE PROFESSIONAL SECURITY GUARDS

It is advisable that when you engage a security guard for your property you get a professional one so that you are assured they know what they are engaged to do. If you afford to install a security alarm system please do so as well. Thieves seem not to like properties that are equipped with alarm systems. For some of us who do not afford a professional security guard or an alarm system, the dog can come-in handy. Dogs are

good at detecting strangers even from afar. Whenever the dog barks do not take that for granted but swiftly react and ascertain there is nothing amiss. Always keep your dogs on the leash. It is not acceptable to allow your pets to roam the streets.

5. NEVER LEAVE THE GARAGE DOOR OPEN

Whether you are away or within the residence, never leave your garage door open. Leaving the garage door open is enough signal for the thief to know you are not home.

6. LEAVING YOUR HOUSE LIGHTS ON DOESN'T HELP ANYMORE

Gone are those days when we would switch-on the lights day and night while enjoying our holiday away and still be assured of safety. Let us not forget that thieves are fast-learners. Nowadays, when you leave the lights on during the day you are indirectly informing thieves that you are not home. It is advisable to task someone with switching the lights on and off during the night and during the day, respectively.

7. DON'T LIVE IN ISOLATION. KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOUR'S NUMBER

Modernity is increasingly isolating families from their neighbours. It is gradually eroding the spirit of neighbourliness in our society particularly in the urban areas. As a result, it is no longer surprising to find that people have lived as neighbours for 20 years but do not know each other's telephone numbers. You might feel that living in isolation is good for you but, believe it or not, it also has its disadvantages. How do you raise an alarm and expect your neighbour to come to your rescue in the event you are attacked when your relations are poor? How does your neighbour inform you there is a break-in at your property when they do not have your contact details? we are equally responsible for policing of our community but how do we achieve that when we do not even know each other? It is of essence that we bring back the spirit of neighbourliness. Let us build relations with our neighbours – even if it is to the bare minimum level.