

# Top 10 home safety tips for Snowbirds

(NC)—When Snowbirds finally make their way down south for their annual vacation away from our brutal Canadian winters the last thing they need to worry about is the safety of their home.

According to Patrice De Luca, vice president of marketing and business development for Reliance Protectron Security Services, there are several key steps Snowbirds should take to ensure peace of mind when away from home. The following Protectron home safety tips for snowbirds can help you plan important safety measures before your

departure: 1. Suspend your newspaper and mail delivery; or have a neighbour collect them for you.

2. Make sure your home looks lived in. Try not to draw the window treatments in every window leave it looking somewhat natural.

3. Have someone routinely shovel the walk, clear your car off if it snows, or park their car in your driveway if you're taking yours.

4. Don't forget garbage collection day. Ask a neighbour to put a bag of garbage at your curb on garbage day so not to tip off burglars.

5. Set your lights on timers, in various rooms. With some timers, the lights go on and off at different times each day, which means a burglar can't pick up on a pattern.

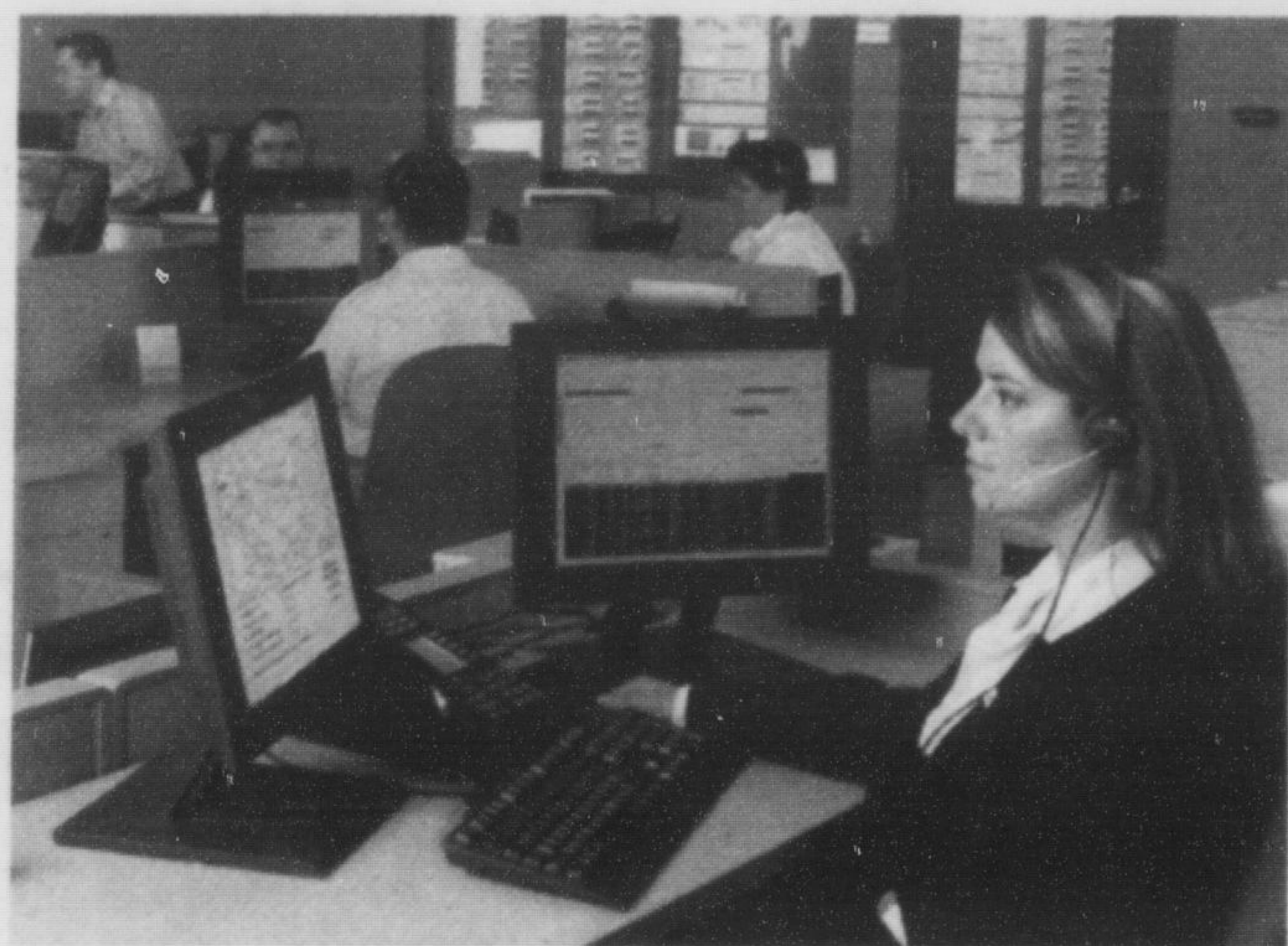
6. Look into installing motion sensor lights outside to help deter a burglar. Consider installing them in front and back.

7. Ensure that all your doors and windows are locked and secure. Don't forget about the garage, make sure the door is secure. For additional security, place a bar or stick of wood in the lower track of your sliding doors or windows.

8. Turn off the water-main and unplug the major appliances as an added precaution.

9. Inform a neighbor when you're leaving and returning, and ask them to keep an eye out for anything suspicious. Leave them a phone number where you can be reached, and a spare set of your keys in case of an emergency.

10. Consider investing in a home security system. A home security system is a very effective deterrent. When looking for their targets, thieves usually select an unoccupied home with the easiest access. Why not make it difficult for them. A home protected by a monitored security system is less susceptible to a break in than one without a sys-



tem. Security system decals and signs are also an effective deterrent. Make sure your security system includes a loud inside alarm, detectors at all exterior doors, and motion sensors in the master bedroom and main living areas.

De Luca says the latest technology in security systems can now allow the monitoring of your home from a distance by wireless transmission (SkyGARD) if you have a cell phone as your primary line for example. The alarm system is linked to a remote monitoring centre that

protects your home 24 hours a day against burglars, fire, carbon monoxide poisoning and floods by supervising the temperature, electrical system and point of entries of your home.

"We can even configure the system to alert you by e-mail of the duration of comings and goings in your home, (cleaning staff, neighbours, family) with the TeleGARD service," De Luca added. More information on protecting your home while you're away is available online at [www.protectron.com](http://www.protectron.com).

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## Quick tips to save on home heating

(NC)— Like an unsung hero, the forgotten basement furnace is expected to keep our home at the perfect indoor temperature day and night. This major piece of household equipment is usually out of sight and out of mind—until the energy bill arrives and instead of appreciation, this unsung hero gets nothing but a frown.

Did you know that when polled, only 25 per cent of Canadian homeowners said that 'booking a furnace maintenance appointment' was a household priority? This finding was reported in a Direct Energy survey conducted recently by Angus Reid. In addition, 57 per cent of respondents said they felt 'concerned' or 'angry' about upcoming winter heating bills.

Homeowners can regain far more control of this however. Take a look at this quick and easy tip-list for better heating efficiency, courtesy of Direct Energy:

1. **Clean or replace the furnace filter.** This one maintenance measure makes a big difference and should be done every three months. Better still, sign up for a furnace protection and maintenance plan. The better ones give you 24-hour emergency service by licensed technicians, plus an annual inspection. The technicians do safety tests for carbon monoxide and natural gas leaks, and they also test the combustion exhaust of the furnace.

2. **Temperature control.** Install a programmable thermostat set to lower the temperature throughout the night, or during the day when you are not at home.

3. **Circulate:** Remember that warm air rises so turn on your ceiling fan to redistribute it into the rest of the room. In the winter months, the blades should rotate in a clockwise direction.

4. **Don't heat unused spaces:** Check to make sure that non-insulated places (like the garage and crawl spaces) are not receiving (and immediately losing) valuable heat. In unused rooms, close the registers to conserve.

5. **Boost the insulation.** A good rule-of-thumb is to aim for approximately 30 centimeters (12 inches) of insulation in the attic and make sure basement headers have insulation too.

6. **Assess the furnace.** Investigate the advantages of replacing your conventional furnace with a high-efficiency one. Reports show that this can result in cost savings as high as 15 per cent – making it well worth the investment.

More information is available online at [DirectEnergy.com](http://DirectEnergy.com).

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