

# SPOTLIGHT



A GUIDE FOR LANDLORDS

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## PROTECTING YOUR INVESTMENT

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# Vacant Property Security - Minimising Your Risks



**It's a strange thing to say, but there are more things you can do to ensure the security of your property when it's vacant than when it's occupied. When you have tenants, you can put in all the alarms and smoke sensors you want, but there is no guarantee that they will be used and not abused, so the safety and security of your asset is really down to the tenant.**



*Simon Morris, Managing Director,  
Compound Security Specialists*

When property becomes vacant is the time when you can take control over the safety and security of your precious asset yourself and, if done correctly, can provide total peace of mind. As experts in the field of temporary security for both residential and commercial property, we will give you some tips on the most effective ways of protecting your property cost effectively during those vacant periods.

Before I get on to the physical aspects of securing your property, don't forget that it is likely a requirement of your insurance policy that you notify your insurer when the property is vacant. Failure to do so could mean that you are not covered if the property is damaged or broken into. It is also worth informing the local police that your property is vacant, especially if you feel it is in a high-risk location.

Getting on to the physical aspects, first let's consider the various potential issues associated with an empty residential property.

- 1. Opportunistic vandalism**
- 2. Squatters**
- 3. Theft of kitchens, bathrooms, boilers and copper pipes.**
- 4. Fire**
- 5. Flood either due to burst pipes or weather**

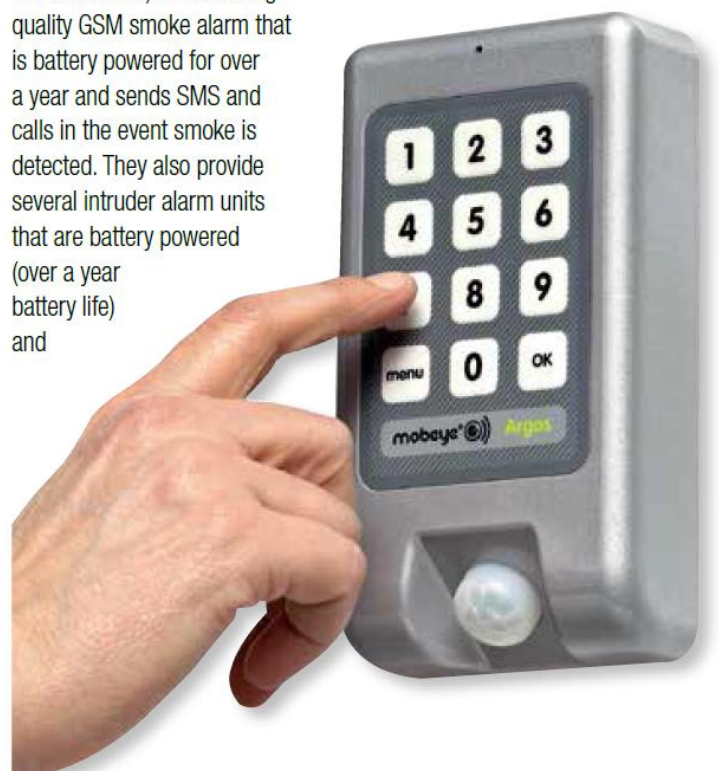
Let's start with opportunistic vandalism. Obviously empty properties attract kids. They want somewhere to hang out that provides some degree of shelter and privacy for smoking and drinking and that leads to damage and litter, etc. As the inventors of The Mosquito Anti-Loitering device, we deal with this type of issue with clients on a daily basis. Putting internal lights/lamps on timers, clearing up outside on a weekly basis and keeping front gardens in good order will give the property that lived-in look and make it less of a target.

Squatters are becoming less of an issue these days due to new legislation for removing them from residential properties. However, it really is still a hassle in terms of getting them out and the time involved, as well as the costs of the inevitable cleanup, so it is something worth taking the time and effort to prevent. As with the vandalism issue, keeping the outside of the property clean and tidy and regularly picking up the junk mail and switching lights on a timer generally does the trick in terms of putting off the would-be interlopers.

Flooding is not usually a major consideration if you turn off the water at the mains when the property is vacated. However, there are unfortunately those of us who live in areas increasingly prone to flooding. If you do not live locally to your rental property and you have concerns about being flooded, there are a number of excellent quality GSM communicating flood alarms on the market (such as the Mobeys range) that can be installed in a few minutes and will alert you to even a tiny amount of flooding by SMS and a phone call. No power or telephone lines are required.

Theft and fire are the most common issues facing landlords with vacant property. It may be that the property has a security system installed, but on those rare occasions the majority of systems simply sound like sirens which, as we all know, are ignored by everyone, unless you have a really good neighbour. Obviously there will be smoke sensors in the property, but again, these, like the security systems, simply make a noise and are of no use to an absentee landlord. The good news is that both these issues can be effectively addressed quickly and simply in one of two ways.

The first way of dealing with these two concerns is the DIY method. The Mobeys range (and I am sure there are some made by other manufacturers) include a high quality GSM smoke alarm that is battery powered for over a year and sends SMS and calls in the event smoke is detected. They also provide several intruder alarm units that are battery powered (over a year battery life) and



alert users again by text and call. One alarm in the ground floor hallway along with a smoke alarm will provide a good level of safety and security for just a few hundred pounds and can easily be moved from property to property as required.

If you want a higher level of safety and security, or you have a number of properties in a large geographic area and do not have the time for the DIY method, there are companies like ours that specialise in installing industry-accredited temporary security systems which are monitored 24/7 by a monitoring station. Some even send videos of the activation, which means that a local alarm response company can race to site on your behalf and/or call the police. These systems are becoming more common and cost-effective, starting from as little as £40 per week for a 3-bed property, and most include not only intruder detection, but fire and flood protection too. If you decide that this is the type of safety and security you need for your property, make sure you use a provider that is certified to SSAIB Temporary Alarm Systems for Vacant Property or NSI NCP115, both of which are recognised by insurers and will in most cases reduce the vacant property insurance premiums and assure you that what you are getting is fit for purpose.

Of course, when you re-let the property you are once again in the hands of your tenants!



For more information, visit: [www.compoundsecurityspecialists.co.uk](http://www.compoundsecurityspecialists.co.uk) or call: 0800 030 4090 or email: [simon@compoundsecurity.co.uk](mailto:simon@compoundsecurity.co.uk)



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