

A GUIDE FOR SEASONAL AND NEW OWNERS

Away From Home: *the Seasonal Owner's Guide* to Southwest Florida Homes

Buying, closing, opening and protecting a home you don't live in all year.

Welcome to Florida.

The house looks the same as one up north. It doesn't behave the same.

This guide grew out of a conversation with new clients who had just closed on a new-construction home. They had owned houses for decades, but never one in Southwest Florida, and never one they would leave empty for six months at a time. Their questions were good ones. Should we shut off the water? What do we do with the patio furniture? What happens if the air conditioning stops while we're gone?

Most seasonal owners ask the same things, usually after something has already gone wrong. A Florida home is built to handle heat, rain and wind, but it depends on a few systems running quietly in the background. The air conditioner is not only for comfort here; it is what keeps the humidity out of your drywall, cabinets and closets. A small leak that would be a nuisance in a house you live in can run for weeks in a house nobody is watching.

None of this is meant to worry you. Nearly every expensive problem in an empty Florida home is preventable, and most of the prevention is simple: a valve turned off, a filter changed, a cushion brought inside, someone local who looks in on the place. This guide walks through all of it, from the week you move in to the day you come back in the fall.

Read it once, keep it in a kitchen drawer, and use the checklists every season. If you have a question it doesn't answer, call us. We would rather talk it through now than help you sort it out later.

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TRIDENT HOME WATCH · 239-356-6600

Contents

Start anywhere. The checklists in sections 4 and 7 are the ones you'll use every year.

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01

SECTION ONE

Florida Homes Are Different

Up north, winter is the season that tests a house. Here it's summer, and it tests the house most while you're away.

IN THIS SECTION

Humidity, the quiet problem
Sun and UV
Storms and the rainy season

Water, irrigation and local rules
Pests and wildlife
Salt air and corrosion

Six things northern owners learn the hard way

None of them are dramatic on their own. Together they explain almost every problem we see in seasonal homes.

<div>< 60%</div> <div>Indoor humidity to stay under. The EPA's recommended range is 30 to 50 percent.</div>	<div>Jun – Nov</div> <div>Atlantic hurricane season, June 1 to November 30, which overlaps almost exactly with the months most seasonal owners are gone.</div>	<div>24–48 hrs</div> <div>How quickly mold can begin growing on wet building materials, according to the EPA.</div>
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1. Humidity is the real enemy

Outdoor humidity here sits high most of the year, and summer heat drives it into anything that isn't sealed and conditioned. Your air conditioner removes that moisture as it cools. When it stops, or when someone sets it too high to save money, the house begins absorbing water from the air. Drywall softens, cabinet doors swell, leather and fabric mildew, closets start to smell. It happens slowly, and it is far cheaper to prevent than to fix.

2. The sun is stronger than it looks

Florida UV fades cushions, rugs, wood floors and furniture near windows in a single season. It breaks down outdoor fabrics, plastic and rubber seals. Blinds and shades are not just for privacy here; they protect what's inside.

3. Storms come with the calendar

The rainy season runs roughly from late May into October, with afternoon thunderstorms most days, lightning, and sudden heavy downpours. Hurricane season sits on top of it. Anything loose outdoors can become a projectile, and power outages are common enough that every home should have a plan for one.

4. Water behaves differently here

Many Cape Coral homes irrigate with reclaimed water through a separate line, so the lawn can keep watering even with the house's main water turned off. Reclaimed water is not drinking water. Watering days are assigned by the last digit of your address and can tighten during droughts, so check the City's current schedule before you set your controller. Some newer neighborhoods are on private wells and septic systems rather than city utilities; know which you have.

5. Pests move in fast

Ants, roaches, palmetto bugs, wasps, frogs and lizards all treat an empty house as an invitation. A dry drain trap, a torn lanai screen or a bag of birdseed in the garage is enough. Rodents and wasps like stored outdoor cushions and covered grills.

6. Salt air and heat age everything

Near the Gulf and the canals, salt air corrodes hinges, lanai screws, light fixtures, A/C coils and car finishes. Heat shortens the life of batteries, rubber hoses and anything with a seal. Plan on more maintenance than you're used to, and on parts wearing out sooner.

THE SHORT VERSION

A Florida home left alone isn't really resting. The A/C, the drains and the roof are working every day you're gone, and the most important thing you can do is make sure someone would notice if one of them stopped.

02

SECTION TWO

Getting to Know Your Home

Before anything goes wrong, learn where everything is. Ten minutes with a roll of labels now saves an hour on the phone later.

IN THIS SECTION

Find and label every shutoff
Your builder's warranty
The A/C system and its drain line

Hurricane protection inventory
Local rules worth knowing
Insurance and documentation

The first month in a new home

Especially for new construction, where nobody has lived in the house long enough to learn its habits.

■ FIND, LABEL AND PHOTOGRAPH

Walk the house with a phone and photograph each of these with a label you can read. Put the photos in a shared album with anyone who might need them, including your home watch company.

- **Main water shutoff.** Often at the meter near the street, with a second valve where the line enters the house or garage.
- **Irrigation shutoff and controller.** Know whether your sprinklers run on reclaimed water, city water or a well.
- **Water heater** and its breaker, plus whether it has a vacation mode.
- **Electrical panel.** Confirm the breakers are labeled accurately; builder labels are sometimes generic.
- **A/C air handler, filter location and filter size.** Write the size on the handler with a marker.
- **A/C condensate drain line** and its access port or cleanout.
- **Outdoor A/C disconnect** near the condenser.
- **Individual valves** under every sink, behind each toilet, at the washer and behind the refrigerator.
- **Smoke and CO detectors,** and the date they were installed.
- **Well, pump and septic tank** locations, if you have them.

■ YOUR BUILDER'S WARRANTY

Most builders provide a limited warranty with a deadline for reporting workmanship issues, often around the one-year mark. Read it in the first month and put the deadline on your calendar. Then schedule a walkthrough a month or two before it expires. Look for drywall cracks, doors that stick or don't latch, grout and caulk gaps, low water pressure, slow drains, A/C rooms that never cool evenly, and water stains on ceilings or around windows. If you'll be up north when the deadline arrives, have someone local do the walkthrough and photograph everything for you.

■ THE AIR CONDITIONING SYSTEM

In Florida the A/C runs most of the year, and it produces a surprising amount of water as it dehumidifies. That water leaves through a condensate drain line. When the line clogs with algae, the water backs up; most systems have a float switch that shuts the A/C off when that happens. In an occupied house you notice it within hours. In an empty one, the A/C may sit off for weeks.

- Ask your HVAC company how often the drain line should be flushed and whether a safety float switch is installed.
- Change the filter on schedule. New homes need it more often for the first several months while construction dust settles out.
- Keep a maintenance agreement with an HVAC company. Twice-yearly service is common here.
- Consider a Wi-Fi thermostat that reports both temperature and humidity and alerts your phone.

■ HURRICANE PROTECTION INVENTORY

New homes in our area typically have impact-rated windows and doors, or come with storm shutters or panels for each opening. Find out which you have before the first storm, not during it.

- If you have panels, **number each one and mark the opening it fits**. Keep the hardware, wing nuts and tools in one labeled bin.
- Do a **practice install** on one window so you know how long it takes and what's missing.
- Find the **wind-rating label on the garage door** and know whether it needs bracing.
- Decide now **who will install shutters** if you're out of state when a storm is coming. Section 6 covers this.

■ LOCAL RULES WORTH KNOWING

Fertilizer

Cape Coral prohibits fertilizer containing nitrogen or phosphorus from June 1 through September 30, and within 15 feet of a seawall or any water body. Make sure your lawn service follows it.

Watering days

Irrigation is limited to assigned days and hours based on the last digit of your address. Schedules change during droughts. Program your controller to match and check the City's site each season.

Burrowing owls

Cape Coral has one of the largest burrowing owl populations in Florida, and they are protected under state and federal law. If a burrow is on or near your lot, leave it alone and make sure your lawn crew knows. Nesting season runs February 15 to July 10.

Alarm registration

Many local jurisdictions require alarm systems to be registered. Unincorporated Lee County requires it through the Sheriff's Office; Cape Coral properties are handled by the Cape Coral Police Department. Confirm yours is registered with current contacts.

■ INSURANCE AND DOCUMENTATION

- **Read the vacancy or unoccupancy language** in your homeowner's policy. Some policies limit coverage for certain losses when a home sits empty, or expect regular checks or the water to be turned off. Ask your agent exactly what yours requires and get it in writing.
- **Flood is separate**. Standard homeowner's policies don't cover flood. National Flood Insurance Program policies generally have a 30-day waiting period before coverage starts, so buying one when a storm is on the map is too late.
- **Make a video inventory** of every room, closet and the garage, opening drawers and cabinets as you go. Store it in the cloud, not in the house.
- Keep copies of your policy, warranty documents and appliance manuals in the cloud as well.

HOW TRIDENT HELPS

We can walk the house with you, help locate and label shutoffs, and keep a copy of your home details on file so whoever responds to a problem knows exactly where to go. If your warranty walkthrough lands while you're away, we can photograph and document the house for you.

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SECTION THREE

Securing an Empty House

Most break-ins at seasonal homes don't involve a broken window. They involve a garage door and the door nobody locks.

IN THIS SECTION

The garage problem

Locking the door into the house

Lights, blinds and looking lived-in

Mail, packages and social media

Keys, codes and keyholders

Alarms and cameras

The garage is the front door

Treat it that way, especially when you're gone.

Most people lock the front door and never think about the door between the garage and the house. That's a problem, because the overhead garage door is often the easiest way in. Older openers can be defeated with radio-signal tricks. On many doors, a bent wire hanger slipped through the top seal can reach the emergency release cord in seconds, and the door lifts by hand. And sometimes the door is simply left open by a landscaper, a cleaner or an owner in a hurry to catch a flight.

Once someone is in the garage, they're out of sight, and an unlocked interior door gives them the whole house.

■ WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

- **Put a deadbolt or keypad lock on the door from the garage into the house**, and keep it locked. A keypad makes it easy: no keys to hide, and you can give vendors their own code.
- **Lock out the opener while you're away.** Many wall consoles have a vacation or lock button that disables remotes. Or unplug the opener, as long as your home watch company knows and can still get in another way.
- **Shield the emergency release.** An inexpensive release shield or a zip tie on the release lever makes the hanger trick much harder. Keep it releasable by hand from inside for safety.
- **Don't leave remotes in vehicles** parked outside, and remove them from cars left in airport parking.
- **Know who has opener access**, including app access on phones. Reset codes after contractors finish.
- **Close and check.** Many smart openers can send an alert if the door is left open.

■ LOOKING LIVED-IN

Lights

Put a few lamps on timers or smart plugs with varied schedules, in rooms visible from the street. A house that goes dark at exactly 10:00 every night isn't fooling anyone. Exterior lights on a dusk-to-dawn sensor help too.

Mail and packages

USPS will hold mail for up to 30 days; for a full season, set up temporary forwarding instead. Pause newspaper and subscription deliveries, and ask someone to pick up the occasional stray package or flyer.

Blinds

Partly closed is the right balance. Fully open shows your belongings and lets the sun fade them. Fully shut on every window, every day, looks vacant. Tilted slats block the view and most of the heat.

Social media

Post vacation photos after you're home. Avoid tagging your Florida address or announcing the day you leave.

■ KEYS, CODES AND ALARMS

- **Have a local keyholder.** If an alarm goes off at 2 a.m., or a storm pulls off a shutter, someone needs to be able to get inside today. A local key can save you a flight or a 1,200-mile drive.
- **Give every vendor their own code** where your locks allow it, so you know who came in and can remove access without changing everything.
- **Update your alarm company's call list** so the first call goes to someone who can actually respond in person, not a cell phone in Ohio.
- **Cameras** are useful for seeing that the house is fine. They can't tell you the A/C stopped or a supply line is leaking. Pair them with water and temperature sensors.
- **Never hide a key** outside. Use a lockbox with a code, or better, a keyholder.

HOW TRIDENT HELPS

Our **keyholder service** makes us your local emergency contact for alarms, leaks and outages, with or without a home watch plan. On every visit we check that doors, garage doors and windows are secured and that nothing suggests anyone has been inside.

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SECTION FOUR

Closing the House for the Season

Start this list a week before you leave. The last two days are always busier than you expect.

IN THIS SECTION

The big decisions: water, A/C, water heater
Outdoors, lanai and pool
Plumbing and drains

Kitchen and appliances
Electrical and vehicles
Paperwork and the last walkthrough

The three decisions that matter most

Get these right and most of the checklist that follows is housekeeping.

Should we turn off the water main?

Yes, in most cases. A failed supply line under a sink, a cracked toilet fill valve or a burst washer hose can release hundreds of gallons a day. With the main off, the damage is limited to what's already in the pipes. Some insurers expect it. Two cautions: if your irrigation runs on the house's water supply rather than a separate reclaimed or well line, plan for the lawn, and if the water is off, the water heater must be off or in vacation mode too. If you have a fire sprinkler system inside the home, don't shut off its supply; ask a plumber how your system is plumbed.

What do we do with the water heater?

Use vacation mode if it has one; many newer heat pump and gas units do. Otherwise turn an electric water heater off at its breaker. One rule matters more than the rest: **an electric water heater must be completely full of water before power is restored.** Turning the power on to a tank that has drained burns out the heating elements in seconds. If anyone drains the tank while you're gone, make sure everyone knows that.

Where should the thermostat be set?

Never turn the A/C off. Most seasonal owners set the thermostat between 78 and 82 degrees in cooling mode with the fan on Auto, so the system runs long enough to pull moisture out of the air. If your system has a humidity or dehumidify setting, use it and aim to keep indoor humidity under 60 percent. A thermostat that sends alerts for high temperature or high humidity is one of the best investments a seasonal owner can make.

WHY "AUTO" AND NOT "ON"

With the fan set to On, it keeps blowing between cooling cycles and can push moisture from the wet coil back into the house. On Auto, the fan stops when cooling stops, and the water drains away.

■ OUTDOOR FURNITURE AND CUSHIONS

Bring outdoor furniture inside, or at a minimum bring in the cushions, umbrellas and anything light. A summer storm or a hurricane turns a lanai chair into a projectile, and loose cushions have a way of walking off while you're gone. Six months of Florida sun fades fabric and breaks it down. Cushions left outside become a home for mildew, ants, wasps and the occasional nesting animal, and you come back to filth instead of a place to sit.

Store cushions clean and dry, off the floor, in breathable bags or bins. A garage that gets hot and humid can still mildew them; inside the air-conditioned house is better if you have room.

The closing checklist

Tear it out, copy it, or keep it on your phone. Work top to bottom.

OUTDOORS & LANAI

- ☐ Bring in furniture, or at least cushions and umbrellas
- ☐ Store grill covers, toys, planters, hoses and anything loose
- ☐ Shut off propane at the tank for the grill, if not needed
- ☐ Check lanai screens for tears; repair before leaving
- ☐ Store trash and recycling carts in the garage or secure them
- ☐ Trim branches touching the roof or screen cage
- ☐ Clear gutters and downspouts
- ☐ Confirm the irrigation controller follows your watering days

WATER & PLUMBING

- ☐ Shut off the main water supply (see the cautions on the previous page)
- ☐ Water heater to vacation mode, or off at the breaker
- ☐ Turn off the washer supply valves
- ☐ Turn off the ice maker and its supply valve
- ☐ Cover sink, tub and shower drains with plastic wrap or tape
- ☐ Close toilet lids; stretch plastic wrap over the bowl under the seat
- ☐ Run the disposal with water, then leave it clean and dry
- ☐ Leave the dishwasher door slightly open after a final dry cycle
- ☐ Check under every sink for drips or stains

KITCHEN & APPLIANCES

- ☐ Remove perishables; empty or nearly empty the fridge
- ☐ If unplugging the fridge, clean it and prop the doors open
- ☐ Remove pantry food that attracts pests, or seal it in hard bins
- ☐ Take out all trash, including bathroom and garage cans
- ☐ Wipe crumbs from counters, cabinets and the toaster

ELECTRICAL

- ☐ Unplug TVs, computers and small appliances
- ☐ Set lamps on timers or smart plugs with varied times
- ☐ Leave the A/C, fridge (if running), alarm and Wi-Fi powered
- ☐ Have a generator serviced and know who will run it

VEHICLES, GOLF CARTS & POOL

- ☐ Battery tender on vehicles left behind
- ☐ Fuel stabilizer and a full tank; tires at proper pressure
- ☐ Follow your golf cart's storage and charging instructions
- ☐ Keep pool service going all season
- ☐ Confirm the pool pump timer and chemistry plan

A/C & HUMIDITY

- ☐ Thermostat set to Cool, 78–82°F, fan on Auto
- ☐ Humidity or dehumidify setting on, if available
- ☐ Install a new filter; leave a spare by the air handler
- ☐ Flush the condensate line or have the HVAC company service it
- ☐ Leave interior doors open and closet doors cracked for airflow
- ☐ Ceiling fans off
- ☐ Confirm thermostat and sensor alerts reach your phone

SECURITY

- ☐ Lock every door, including garage-to-house
- ☐ Garage opener locked out or unplugged
- ☐ Windows and sliders locked; security bars in sliders
- ☐ Blinds partly closed
- ☐ Alarm set; call list updated with local contacts

PAPERWORK & PEOPLE

- ☐ Mail forwarding set; deliveries paused
- ☐ Insurance vacancy requirements confirmed
- ☐ HOA notified of your dates and local contact
- ☐ Home watch and keyholder have keys, codes and dates
- ☐ Lawn, pool and pest services know you're leaving
- ☐ Final walkthrough photos of every room

A closer look at drains and toilets

The plastic wrap trick sounds odd until you understand what's under the sink.

Every drain in the house has a trap, a bend in the pipe that holds a little water. That water is the only thing standing between your living room and the sewer or septic system. In a house nobody uses, Florida heat slowly evaporates it. Once a trap dries out, sewer gas comes up through the drain, and so can roaches and other insects that live in the lines.

Covering drains with plastic wrap or painter's tape slows evaporation and blocks the opening. Stretching plastic wrap tightly over the toilet bowl, under the seat, does the same for toilets. It takes ten minutes. Some owners also add a tablespoon of mineral oil to each drain, which floats on the water and slows evaporation further; ask your plumber if that's appropriate for your fixtures.

On regular home watch visits, we run water in every drain and flush every toilet so the traps stay full. That's the other reason a house shouldn't go months without anyone inside.

■ BEFORE YOU LOCK THE DOOR

PHOTOGRAPH

Walk every room and take photos, including under sinks and around the water heater. They're your baseline if something changes.

SHARE

Send your departure date, return date and northern contact info to your home watch company, alarm company and HOA.

CHECK

Walk the house one last time with the checklist. Look at the thermostat, the water main and the garage door before you leave the driveway.

HOW TRIDENT HELPS

Our **end-of-season closing service** takes this list off your plate. We'll bring in and store outdoor furniture and cushions, set the water, water heater and thermostat, wrap drains and toilets, take out the trash, and send you a photo report when the house is closed.

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SECTION FIVE

While You're Away

The problem with an empty house isn't that things go wrong. It's that nobody is there when they do.

IN THIS SECTION

When the A/C quits

When the A/C won't stop

Water leaks

Pests and wildlife

Power outages

What a home watch visit checks

What can happen in an empty house

These are the calls we never want to make. Each one is far smaller when it's found in a week instead of a season.

The A/C stops

WHAT HAPPENS

A tripped breaker, clogged drain line, failed capacitor or lightning strike shuts the system off. Indoor temperature climbs toward the outdoor temperature, and humidity follows. Over weeks, mold can grow on walls, furniture and inside closets. Wood swells, paint blisters, and the smell settles into fabric and drywall.

HOW YOU'D KNOW

Without a sensor or a visit, you'd find out when you open the front door.

WHAT PREVENTS IT

Regular A/C service, a drain line float switch, temperature and humidity alerts, and visits that check the thermostat reading.

The A/C won't stop

WHAT HAPPENS

A thermostat set too low, a failing component or a refrigerant leak keeps the system running nonstop. The coil can ice over, the drain pan can overflow, and the electric bill climbs month after month. A house held at 70 degrees in an empty August can cost hundreds more than it should.

HOW YOU'D KNOW

Usually from the power bill, a month or two later.

WHAT PREVENTS IT

Correct thermostat settings, an energy-use alert from your utility account, and someone checking that the system cycles normally.

A water leak

WHAT HAPPENS

A supply line, toilet valve, water heater, ice maker line or A/C drain pan lets go. Water spreads under flooring and into drywall and baseboards. Mold can begin growing on wet materials within 24 to 48 hours.

HOW YOU'D KNOW

A neighbor might see water under the garage door. Most leaks are silent.

WHAT PREVENTS IT

Turning off the main water supply, leak sensors under sinks and near the water heater and air handler, and visits that look under every sink and at every ceiling.

Pests move in

WHAT HAPPENS

Dry drain traps let roaches in from the lines. Ants find a crumb. Wasps build in the lanai, rodents nest in garage storage, and a torn screen lets in frogs and lizards.

HOW YOU'D KNOW

Droppings, nests and a smell when you return.

WHAT PREVENTS IT

Wrapped drains, no food left behind, intact screens, regular pest control service and someone walking the house.

A power outage

WHAT HAPPENS

A storm or grid problem cuts power for hours or days. The A/C stops, the fridge warms, and some systems don't restart on their own when power returns. Breakers can trip from the surge.

HOW YOU'D KNOW

A smart thermostat or camera going offline is often the first sign.

WHAT PREVENTS IT

Surge protection, an empty or nearly empty fridge, a generator plan, and a visit after any outage to confirm everything restarted.

Damage nobody saw

WHAT HAPPENS

A roof shingle lifts, a screen panel blows out, a window seal fails, a car battery dies, the pool turns green or a tree limb rests on the roof.

HOW YOU'D KNOW

Only if someone walks the outside of the house.

WHAT PREVENTS IT

Exterior checks on every visit, and an extra visit after any significant storm.

What a good home watch visit looks at

A camera shows you a room. A visit checks the systems behind it.

INSIDE

- ☐ Thermostat reading, setting and humidity
- ☐ A/C running and cycling normally; drain line and pan
- ☐ Under every sink, around toilets, the water heater and air handler
- ☐ Ceilings and walls for stains, bubbling or cracks
- ☐ Run water in every drain; flush every toilet
- ☐ Signs of pests, odors, mold or mildew
- ☐ Refrigerator and freezer operating
- ☐ Breaker panel for tripped breakers
- ☐ Smoke detector chirps and alarm panel status
- ☐ Doors, windows and sliders locked

OUTSIDE

- ☐ Roof, soffits and gutters from the ground
- ☐ Windows, doors and garage door secure and undamaged
- ☐ Lanai cage, screens and pool area
- ☐ A/C condenser running and clear of debris
- ☐ Irrigation working without leaks or flooding
- ☐ Signs of entry, damage or anyone staying on the property
- ☐ Stray packages, flyers and door hangers removed
- ☐ Landscaping, trees and branches near the roof
- ☐ Vehicles and golf carts, if left behind
- ☐ Photos of everything checked

HOW OFTEN?

Weekly or every other week is common for homes left empty through summer. Some insurance policies set their own expectations for how often a vacant home is checked; that answer, from your agent, should set your minimum. An extra visit after any major storm or long outage is always worth it.

HOW TRIDENT HELPS

Every Trident visit follows a written checklist and ends with a **photo report** sent to you, so you see what we saw. If something's wrong, you hear from us the same day, along with what we recommend and who can fix it.

06

SECTION SIX

Hurricane Season From a Distance

Most seasonal owners are gone for the whole season. The plan has to work without you in the house.

IN THIS SECTION

Decide before June

Who puts up the shutters

Evacuation zones and alerts

Flood insurance timing

When a storm is coming

After the storm

Make the plan before you leave

Once a storm is on the map, contractors are booked, flights are expensive, and the hardware stores are empty.

Who puts up the shutters?

If your home has shutters or panels instead of impact glass, someone has to install them when a storm threatens and take them down afterward. Doing it yourself means flying in on short notice, often at peak prices, and flying out again ahead of the weather. A single last-minute round trip usually costs more than having a local service handle it, and it puts you on the road or in an airport at the worst possible time. Decide in the spring who will do it, make sure they have access, and confirm that the panels are labeled and the hardware is in one place.

Know your evacuation zone

Lee County assigns evacuation zones based on storm surge risk. Look up your address on Lee County Emergency Management's "Know Your Zone" page and sign up for the county's emergency alerts. Even if you're up north, you'll know when an evacuation order covers your home, and so will your home watch company.

Check your flood coverage now

Flood isn't covered by a standard homeowner's policy, and National Flood Insurance Program policies generally don't take effect until 30 days after purchase. Review coverage and deductibles, including your separate hurricane deductible, with your agent before the season starts.

BEFORE THE SEASON

- ☐ Shutter installer arranged, with access
- ☐ Panels numbered; hardware and tools in one bin
- ☐ Outdoor furniture, cushions and décor stored inside
- ☐ Video inventory current and stored in the cloud
- ☐ Insurance and flood coverage reviewed
- ☐ Evacuation zone known; county alerts on your phone
- ☐ Generator serviced; who runs it is decided
- ☐ Trees trimmed away from the roof

WHEN A STORM IS COMING

- ☐ Confirm the shutter installation time
- ☐ Check that nothing loose remains outside
- ☐ Garage door braced, if your door requires it
- ☐ Pool furniture stored; pool left full
- ☐ Valuables and documents moved off the floor
- ☐ Your contacts confirmed with your home watch company
- ☐ Don't plan to fly in; let the local team work

■ AFTER THE STORM

As soon as it's safe and roads are open, someone should check the house: roof, windows, doors, screens, water intrusion, the A/C, the refrigerator and the breakers. Take photos and video of any damage before anything is moved or cleaned up, and report it to your insurance company quickly. Your policy may require reasonable steps to prevent further damage, like covering a roof opening or drying out wet areas, so the person checking the house should be able to arrange that.

HOW TRIDENT HELPS

We can **coordinate shutter installation and removal**, do a pre-storm check, and get to your home for a **post-storm inspection** as soon as it's safe, with a photo report you can send straight to your insurance company.

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SECTION SEVEN

Opening the House

The goal is to walk in, drop your bags and find the house exactly as you left it, only cooler.

IN THIS SECTION

Two weeks before you arrive
Restoring water safely
The water heater rule

First-day walkthrough
Getting systems back to normal
Services to restart

Coming back without surprises

A little planning from up north means your first night home isn't spent on the phone with a plumber.

■ TWO WEEKS BEFORE YOU ARRIVE

- **Schedule a cleaning** for the day or two before you arrive, so dust, cobwebs and lanai debris are gone when you walk in.
- **Ask your home watch company to open the house:** water on, water heater on, thermostat to your comfort setting, and drains and toilets uncovered and flushed.
- **Book any service you'll want** soon after arriving: A/C maintenance, pest control, pool, windows or carpets. Fall and winter schedules fill quickly.
- **Stop mail forwarding** effective your arrival date and restart deliveries.

THE WATER HEATER RULE, AGAIN

Turn the water on and let the electric water heater fill completely before restoring its power. Open a hot water faucet and wait until water runs steadily, with no sputtering air, then turn the breaker back on. Powering an empty tank burns out the elements.

FIRST DAY: WATER

- ☐ Turn the main water on slowly
- ☐ Run every faucet, hot and cold, for a minute to clear air and stale water
- ☐ Remove drain covers and toilet wrap; flush every toilet
- ☐ Water heater power or mode restored once full
- ☐ Washer and ice maker valves back on; discard the first batches of ice
- ☐ Check under every sink and around toilets for drips
- ☐ Watch the water meter with everything off; if it moves, there's a leak

FIRST DAY: THE REST

- ☐ Thermostat to your comfort setting; listen for normal cycling
- ☐ Replace the A/C filter
- ☐ Plug in electronics and appliances
- ☐ Test smoke and CO detectors
- ☐ Check closets, cabinets and under beds for mildew or pests
- ☐ Open blinds and check window and slider tracks
- ☐ Reconnect garage opener; check vehicle batteries
- ☐ Bring outdoor furniture and cushions back out
- ☐ Reset alarm contacts and light timers
- ☐ First week: walk the outside in daylight and move lawn, pest and pool services to your in-season schedule

HOW TRIDENT HELPS

Our **season-opening service** has the house ready before you land: water and water heater restored, thermostat set, drains and toilets cleared, a full walkthrough completed, and furniture back on the lanai. We can schedule your cleaner and other services so the house is clean and stocked the day you arrive.

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SECTION EIGHT

Your Local Team

Fill these pages in once and update them every season. Keep a copy in the house and a photo on your phone.

IN THIS SECTION

Local contacts and service providers

Home details and locations

Who to call

Don't have someone for every line? Ask us. We'll recommend people we've seen do good work.

SERVICE	COMPANY / NAME	PHONE	ACCOUNT OR NOTES
Home watch	Trident Home Watch	239-356-6600	
Local keyholder			
Alarm company			
Insurance agent			
HOA / manager			
A/C & HVAC			
Plumber			
Electrician			
Handyman			
Pest control			
Lawn service			
Irrigation			
Pool service			
Water treatment			
Well / septic			
Shutter installer			
Cleaning service			
Builder warranty			
Electric utility			
Water utility			

Before hiring any contractor, check their license with the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation at myfloridalicense.com and ask for proof of insurance.

Your home at a glance

Where things are, so anyone responding to a problem doesn't have to hunt.

ITEM	LOCATION OR DETAILS
Main water shutoff	
Irrigation shutoff & controller	
Irrigation source	Reclaimed ☐ City ☐ Well ☐
Watering days & hours	
Electrical panel	
Water heater & breaker #	
A/C air handler	
A/C filter size	
A/C installed / last serviced	
Condensate line cleanout	
Shutters / panels stored	
Generator & fuel	
Septic tank / well	
Trash & recycling day	
Builder warranty deadline	
Evacuation zone	
Departure / return dates	

KEEP CODES OFF PAPER

Don't write alarm codes, door codes or Wi-Fi passwords in this guide. Share them directly with your home watch company and keyholder, and change them if anyone who had them no longer needs access.

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SECTION NINE

How Trident Can Help

*Everything in this guide can be done by an owner with time and a plane ticket.
We're here for the parts you'd rather not.*

IN THIS SECTION

Home watch visits
Closing and opening
Storm support

Keyholder service
Special services
Recommendations

Services for seasonal owners

Trident Home Watch serves Cape Coral, Fort Myers and Lee County.

Home watch visits

Scheduled inside and outside checks on a written checklist, with a photo report after every visit and a same-day call if anything needs attention.

Season opening

Water and water heater restored safely, thermostat set, drains cleared, a full walkthrough, and the lanai put back together before you arrive.

Keyholder service

A local, 24/7 emergency contact for alarms, leaks and outages, listed on your alarm registration. Available with or without a home watch plan.

Vendor recommendations

Need a cleaner, A/C company, plumber or lawn service? Ask. We'll point you to people we've seen do good work.

End-of-season closing

Outdoor furniture and cushions brought in, water, water heater and thermostat set, drains and toilets covered, trash removed, and a report when the house is closed.

Storm support

Shutter installation and removal coordinated for you, a pre-storm check, and a post-storm inspection with photos for your insurance company.

Special services

One-time help when you're away: trash and debris removal, letting in a contractor, receiving a delivery, or checking on something specific. Each one is documented with a photo report.

Boat watch

Regular checks on a boat left at your dock while you're away, documented the same way as the house.

START WITH A CONVERSATION

Every home is different, and so is every owner's calendar. Call us at **239-356-6600** or visit **tridenthomewatch.com** for a free quote, and we'll build a plan around your house and your dates.



Your house doesn't need you there all year.
It needs someone to notice.

CALL

239-356-6600

VISIT

tridenthomewatch.com

CAPE CORAL ~ FORT MYERS ~ LEE COUNTY