

## Tips for Snowbirds Heading North

*The following article is adapted from FPL, most of the hints are energy related, but there are some general suggestions that will be beneficial for people preparing their homes for the spring/summer/fall away.*

*Remember to check with your Insurance carrier on the frequency of checking your Condo, it is a good idea to have a person come on a regular basis (such as bi-weekly or monthly) for a few minutes to check your home for potential problems. Better to know than arrive months later to a nasty surprise!*

As you start to make your arrangements before leaving town, here are some recommendations to help you prepare your home and manage your FPL account while away.

### 1. Account management

- Check your Energy Dashboard online at FPL.com to monitor your usage while you are away and check for any unusual changes in energy usage, which could indicate an appliance or A/C malfunction.
- Combine FPL E-Mail Bill® and FPL Automatic Bill Pay® for the easiest way to receive and pay your FPL bill while you're away. If you don't have a computer this can be arranged by telephone with FPL.

### 2. Appliances

- Cable or satellite boxes: Unplug or turn off to avoid paying for energy you aren't using. You can return them if rented to Comcast or Verizon...check your contract.
- Water heater: Turn off the circuit breaker to the water heater, or unplug it.
- Small appliances and electronics: Unplug. For security reasons, you may want to place timers on indoor lamps. If you leave your broadband connected when away, you can use smart plugs to control table lamps.
- Dishwasher: Empty and leave the door open. Have the person checking it to add water so the drain area doesn't dry out.
- Washing machine: Leave the lid open.
- Refrigerators:
  - If you prefer to keep your refrigerator on, set it at its warmest setting. You can place pantry items in it to protect them from insect activity and prolong freshness.
  - If you prefer to keep your refrigerator off, make sure to clean the interior with a solution of 1 tbsp. of baking soda in 1 quart of water, dry thoroughly and leave doors open. Turn off the circuit breaker to the refrigerator. Remove all food from the freezer and refrigerator, and leave the door(s) propped open.
  - If you have an automatic ice maker, switch it to the "off" position.

### 3. A/C settings and mold prevention

- Change your A/C filter. If it is washable, then wash it. An accumulation of dirt plus the summer heat and humidity can lead to mildew and mold growth, which can spread through the house.
- For programmable or smart thermostats: Set your A/C to run at 72 degrees for just two hours each morning before sunrise and at 88 degrees for the remainder of the time.

- For non-programmable thermostats: Set your A/C to run at 80 to 82 degrees while you are away.
  - Set the controls of your **humidistats** and/or dehumidifiers to 58 to 65 percent RH to maintain acceptable humidity, since some humidistat sensors are inaccurate by as many as 10 percentage points.
  - Open your closet and cabinet doors, just to keep fresh air moving in and out of those areas.
4. Safety and security
- Make sure all smoke alarms are working and have fresh batteries.
  - Turn off the main water valve (located outside near your outdoor faucet).
  - Ask someone to check on your property every few weeks for problems that could pop up, such as plumbing leaks or storm damage and insect infestation.
  - Make sure all doors and windows are locked.
  - Close your drapes and blinds. This will help keep strangers from peeping in to see what you own and check for signs you may be away.
  - Stop newspaper/mail deliveries. Stacks of paper outside or a full mailbox may attract unwanted attention. Have your mailbox emptied by your person once or twice a week, or forward your mail to your northern address (not available to Canadians), put a “no flyers” sign in the mailbox to minimize waste.