



Absentee Owner Property Watch Checklist

A personal planning guide for seasonal, second-home, and absentee coastal property owners.

Use this checklist before leaving your coastal property unattended for an extended period. It is designed for your personal planning and preparation.

Leaving a coastal property unattended for days, weeks, or months at a time creates unique concerns. Weather, humidity, storms, power interruptions, water leaks, pests, access issues, and unnoticed exterior damage can all become larger problems if no one is routinely observing the property.

This checklist is intended to help you organize your preparation, reduce preventable issues, and think through what should be checked before and during an extended absence.

Coastal Property Watch

Serving Carteret County, Bogue Banks, Swansboro, and nearby coastal communities.

1. Before You Leave the Property

- Lock all exterior doors.
- Lock all windows and sliding doors.
- Close and lock garage doors.
- Secure gates, fences, and access points.
- Bring in or secure outdoor furniture.
- Secure trash cans and recycling bins.
- Remove loose items from porches, patios, balconies, and decks.
- Check that exterior lights are working.
- Confirm house numbers are visible for emergency responders.

2. Interior Preparation

- Remove trash from the home.
- Remove perishable food.
- Clean out refrigerator items that may spoil.
- Check freezer and refrigerator doors for proper closure.
- Run garbage disposal, if applicable.
- Check toilets for continuous running.
- Check sinks and faucets for drips.
- Check under sinks for signs of leaks.
- Confirm windows are fully closed and locked.
- Close blinds or curtains as preferred.
- Secure valuables out of plain view.

3. Water, Plumbing, and Moisture Concerns

Water damage can become serious if it is not discovered quickly.

- Know where the main water shutoff is located.
- Decide whether water should remain on or be shut off while away.
- Check water heater area for visible concerns.
- Check laundry area for signs of leaks.
- Check around toilets, sinks, tubs, and showers.
- Check ceilings for stains or signs of moisture.
- Check walls and baseboards for discoloration or swelling.
- Consider using water leak detectors in high-risk areas.
- Confirm any crawlspace or basement access is secure, if applicable.

4. HVAC and Humidity Control

Humidity is a major concern for coastal properties.

- Set thermostat to an appropriate away temperature.
- Avoid turning HVAC completely off for long absences.
- Replace HVAC filter if needed.
- Confirm vents are open and unobstructed.
- Check that exterior HVAC unit is clear of debris.
- Consider humidity monitoring if the home is unattended for long periods.
- Schedule routine HVAC service as recommended by a qualified technician.

5. Electrical and Fire Safety

- Unplug nonessential small appliances.
- Confirm stove and oven are off.
- Confirm space heaters, candles, and similar hazards are not in use.
- Test smoke alarms before leaving.
- Test carbon monoxide alarms, if applicable.
- Replace batteries if needed.
- Confirm electrical panel is accessible.
- Consider surge protection for sensitive electronics.

6. Mail, Packages, and Signs of Vacancy

- Forward or hold mail if appropriate.
- Pause regular deliveries if needed.
- Ask a trusted person to remove packages, flyers, or notices.
- Arrange trash and recycling service if needed.
- Make sure landscaping does not appear neglected.
- Avoid leaving visible signs that the property is unoccupied.

7. Lawn, Pool, Pest, and Routine Services

- Confirm lawn service schedule.
- Confirm pool or spa service schedule.
- Confirm pest control schedule.
- Confirm irrigation schedule, if applicable.
- Confirm trash and recycling arrangements.
- Confirm any scheduled maintenance visits.
- Provide vendors with clear instructions if they are expected on-site.

8. Coastal and Waterfront Property Items

For waterfront, canal-front, soundside, or ocean-exposed properties:

- Secure dock boxes.
- Secure kayaks, paddleboards, and small watercraft.
- Check dock ladders and loose items.
- Confirm boat lift is positioned as desired.
- Secure outdoor cushions and dock furniture.
- Check visible bulkhead or seawall areas.
- Check outdoor electrical near docks or waterfront areas.
- Remove or secure items that could be affected by wind, tide, or storm surge.
- Photograph waterfront areas before extended absences.

9. Storm Season Preparation

Before hurricane season or extended absences during storm season:

- Review local emergency alert sources.
- Know the local evacuation zone for the property.
- Secure storm shutters or window protection if applicable.
- Photograph the property before storm season.
- Review homeowners and flood insurance documents.
- Secure outdoor furniture and loose items.
- Confirm who can access the property after a storm.
- Identify preferred contractors before an emergency occurs.
- Plan for post-storm property observation if you cannot return quickly.

10. Documentation Before Leaving

Before departing, consider taking photos or videos of:

- Exterior of the home.
- Roofline visible from ground level.
- Doors and windows.
- Decks, stairs, and porches.
- Yard and fence areas.
- Dock, lift, bulkhead, or waterfront areas.
- Interior main rooms.
- Utility areas.
- Water heater area.
- HVAC thermostat setting.
- Appliances and major fixtures.

11. Emergency Planning

Before leaving the property unattended, make sure you have easy access to:

- Property address.
- Local emergency contact.
- Trusted keyholder or access method.
- Insurance company contact information.
- Preferred plumber.
- Preferred electrician.
- Preferred HVAC company.
- Preferred general contractor or handyman.
- Alarm company contact information.
- HOA or property manager contact, if applicable.

Do not leave sensitive access codes, alarm codes, or key information in unsecured locations.

12. When to Consider a Property Watch Visit

- The property will be vacant for an extended period.
- You live out of the area.
- A major storm has passed through the area.
- You need photo documentation of visible conditions.
- You need someone to observe the property exterior.
- You need authorized interior observation.
- You have concerns about leaks, humidity, damage, or access issues.
- Vendors are scheduled and you need access coordination.
- The property is seasonal, waterfront, or difficult to monitor remotely.

13. Quick Departure Checklist

- Doors locked.
- Windows locked.
- Thermostat set.
- Water preference addressed.
- Trash removed.
- Perishable food removed.
- Outdoor items secured.
- Mail and packages addressed.
- Alarm set, if applicable.
- Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms checked.
- Vendors scheduled.
- Emergency contacts updated.
- Photos taken.
- Property watch visit scheduled, if needed.

Important Notice

This checklist is provided for general planning and personal use only. It is not a substitute for a professional home inspection, insurance inspection, licensed contracting service, emergency response, security service, law enforcement service, or official emergency management guidance.

For emergencies, contact 911 or the appropriate public safety agency. For repairs, code concerns, insurance claims, or technical evaluations, contact the appropriate licensed professional, insurance representative, or public authority.

Need help checking your coastal property? Coastal Property Watch provides documented property observation services with photos and written reports for absentee and seasonal property owners.

Services may include exterior observation, authorized interior observation, storm-related visits, vendor access coordination, photo documentation, and written reports.

Website:	mycoastalwatch.com
Service Area:	Carteret County, Bogue Banks, Swansboro, and nearby coastal communities