



SEASONAL  
HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION

## How to Choose A Home Watch Company

Home Watch is an emerging and unregulated home service. The industry lacks formal registration, licensing requirements, and mandated standards of practice. It is highly fragmented, consisting largely of individuals without formal training, certifications, or accreditations recognized by any government or educational authority. The act of entrusting a third party with access to your home while you are away requires a high degree of diligence and caution. This checklist has been compiled to assist seasonal homeowners and frequent travelers in the evaluation of prospective home watch companies.

1	<b>Insurance, Bonding, and Licensing:</b> Does the company carry General Liability, Contractor's Professional Liability, and a Dishonesty Bond? Are they registered with your State or Province?
2	<b>Service Personnel and Experience:</b> Who will be providing the service, and what is their experience? Are they background checked? What if the primary provider is unavailable? Who will have access to your keys or access codes?
3	<b>Reporting and Communication</b> How will you be notified about each service visit, and is a written report provided? Do the reports include pictures? Can you see sample report(s) and references from existing clients?
4	<b>Ongoing Education and Support:</b> If they have a question on a condition they find, new type of system or unusual situation do they have access to experienced professionals available to answer their questions and provide ongoing support?
5	<b>What details of your home do they document for future reference?</b> Do they document current service agreements, your preferred vendors, trash days, system details (type, age, model), leak detection systems, vendor schedules, etc.?
6	<b>Tools, Equipment, Access:</b> What tools and equipment do they carry to perform a thorough inspection (e.g., hygrometers for humidity)? Will they access attics or crawlspaces?
7	<b>Full-time vs. Part-time Operations:</b> Is this not their full-time business, and how does this impact their availability and services?
8	<b>Emergency Response Protocol:</b> What constitutes an emergency, and how do they handle urgent issues? Do they have a network of recommended contractors for different types of repairs? How do they charge for coordinating repairs?
9	<b>Schedules, Pricing and Refund Policies:</b> What do they charge? Do they offer monthly visits or only bi-monthly or weekly visits? What is their cancellation and refund policy?
10	<b>Do They Require a Written Service Agreement?</b> Which includes a detailed scope of work or commitment to a standards of practice prior to commencing service?

1

**Insurance, Bonding, and Licensing:** It's important that the company you hire has insurance to address unforeseen issues that could arise as part of the delivery of the service. Carrying the necessary insurances is a strong indication that you are dealing with a credible company.

2

**Service Personnel and Experience:** You will want to know who has access to your home, who will be in and out of your home. If the home watch company does not have any formal procedures to ensure your home will not be accessed by unauthorized persons, consider finding another provider.

3

**Reporting and Communication:** At minimum a Home Watch Provider should provide you with a written report documenting what they checked and any notable conditions, conditions that require immediate attention, with pictures that are date and time stamped. This documentation is essential in the event you have to file an insurance claim.

4

**Ongoing Education and Support:** There is training or accreditation for home watch providers other than those that have been self appointed. And even those rarely offer ongoing support. Working with a company that has access to ongoing education and support is a big plus and indicator that the company is qualified and conscientious.

5

**What details of your home do they document for future reference?** Quality Home Watch Providers understand that the more details they can gather about your house including systems and elements, your preferred vendors, and service agreements, the better they can serve you. If the provider you are considering doesn't use a formal Client Property Profile Form to document these details, they may not be your best option. Find one that does!

6

**Tools, Equipment, Access:** If the company you are considering doesn't use the basic tools of the trade (digital thermometer, thermal imaging camera, outlet testers, hygrometer) keep shopping for one that does.

7

**Full-time vs. Part-time Operations:** There is no harm in hiring a part time provider you just want to be 100% sure of their availability particular during storm seasons and their back up plan if their other commitments get in the way of their service.

8

**Emergency Response Protocol:** Experienced, professional providers have a plan in place for handling immediate repairs, storm issues, etc. If the company you are considering can speak confidently about how they handle these issues, move on.

9

**Schedules, Pricing and Refund Policies:** Price is important. But quality service, insurance, experience, ongoing support is more important. Less credentialed home watch providers who often cut corners on reports and insurance could leave you holding the bag when the storm hits or if you have to file an insurance claim. Your house and your peace of mind is worth paying a little bit more.

10

**Do They Require a Written Service Agreement?** No responsible business especially one that is offering to safeguard one of your most significant investments would do so without a written agreement. A written agreement protects both you and them. No agreement, no service is our position.

Seasonal homeownership should be a pleasure not a problem. By hiring a qualified home watch professional you will worry less and enjoy more! We guarantee it! To find an Seasonal Homeownership Association Affiliate company go to [seasonalhomeowner.org/homewatch](http://seasonalhomeowner.org/homewatch).

**[seasonalhomeownership.org](http://seasonalhomeownership.org)**

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