



Security Briefing *by Lockbart Steele*

STAY IN TOUCH WITH YOUR HOME EVEN WHEN FAR AWAY

As the days lengthen, some Palm Beach residents will be heading north. Many people, of course, won't depart for other shores for a while, and those that do may return for summer visits before next winter. But, whether leaving for a week or six months, homeowners must deal with uncertainties about the properties they are leaving behind.

That begs a technology question: how best to ensure that your house stays safe and sound in your absence? Good security systems should take care of the threat posed by thieves. But what about the problems not caused by miscreants—problems like leaking pipes, or malfunctioning HVAC systems?

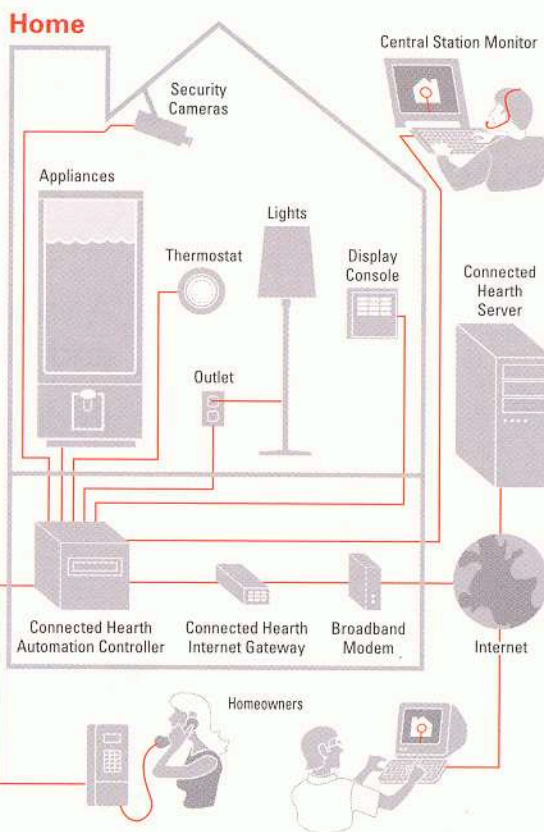
One popular non-technical solution—hiring a caretaker to look in on the property—is an old standby, but it lacks immediate notification in the case of a serious problem. At the other end of the spectrum, new “smart homes” offer remote control over many aspects of a property—but with significant installation required that can be hard to retrofit into existing homes. Now, though, companies are creating more practical solutions that let homeowners stay in touch with their homes from virtually anywhere on the globe, via the web. Many systems are designed to interface with existing security systems, too.

Crestron, which makes advanced home control devices that manage everything from lighting to digitized movie collections, recently updated its e-Control system. With any Windows-based PC, e-Control operates within a standard web browser to monitor and control lighting, HVAC systems, home security and more. If security cameras have been installed in the house—an increasingly popular choice—they can be viewed through the interface. Monitoring can even extend to handheld PDAs, which custom installers see as the Holy Grail of total remote home control.

Crestron and its primary competitor, AMX, are considered by many to be the Rolls-Royces of home automation. But they are hardly the only players in this increasingly varied market. Speco Technologies brings a touch of TiVo to remote home monitoring systems. Speco's solution allows you to digitally record up to four cameras in your home and view the feeds on any Internet-connected PC.

Taking things a step further, a new family of control projects from HomeLogic, called OneHome, can be operated from the web and via telephone. Benefits of this system include not just the standard climate control and video surveillance but also irrigation control—a boon to weary gardeners. Prices on these systems vary depending on the implementations chosen; a professional installer can help you decide on a service that's right for you.

Up in the Hamptons, a startup called Connected



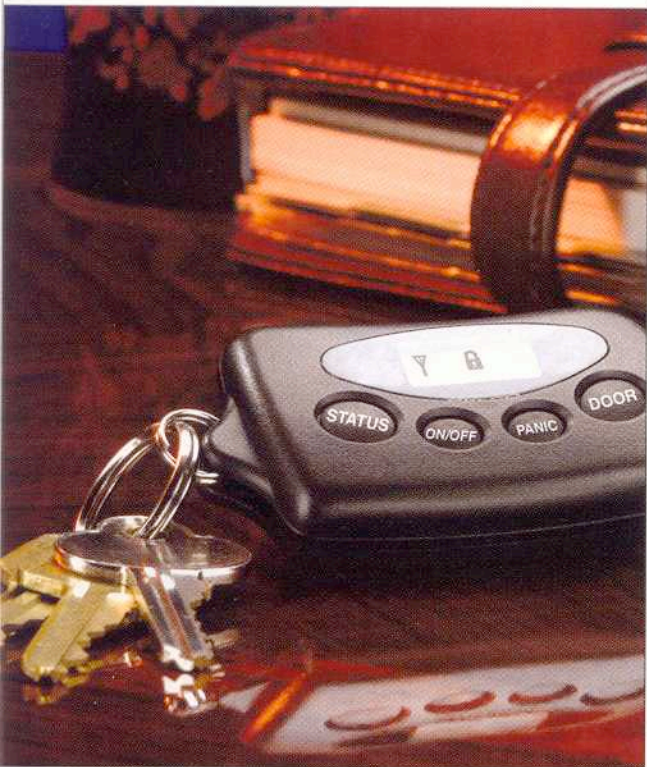
Remote Control | How easy is it to control a home from a web browser? Crestron's e-Control system (ABOVE) makes it as simple as pointing and clicking. The interface allows users to adjust temperatures, check security cameras and control lighting, among other features. **Wired Up**

Connected Hearth's Internet Gateway system (LEFT) shows how the various parts of a home can be networked together to a central system accessible over the Internet. One advantage of this system is that there's no in-house computer required. Though the service is not yet available in Palm Beach, experts say similar solutions will be available here soon. See Resources.

Hearth is also jumping into the game. For a starting cost of about \$6,000, Connected Hearth gives a homeowner the ability to control two thermostats, up to 16 lights and appliances, and to check in on four webcams positioned throughout the house. The company's server connects to the house every 60 seconds, checking the status of the security and fire alarms, plus any water sensors. In an emergency, emails will automatically be sent to email addresses specified by the homeowner—or even as a text message to a cell phone. Though the service currently is only available on Long Island, similar offerings are likely coming to South Florida soon.

Not surprisingly, other companies are pursuing similar needs in the home security market. Napco Security Group offers a security control panel that gives owners remote control over their properties. Temperature settings, for instance, can be adjusted by Internet or by phone. But the control panel, called the X255, offers its greatest value in the home security sphere. Its name stems from the fact that the panel can divide a house into 255 separate zones, making it possible for owners to isolate an alarm for a work of art or a wine cellar. The panel can also be operated by a keychain, allowing for easy disarming—as simple as turning off a car alarm.

"We developed this system especially for our higher-end clientele," says Richard Soloway, Napco's chairman. Napco has another interesting new product: motion sensors that can tell the difference between a cat and an actual intruder. A step in the right direction, to be sure.



Screen Saver | High-end home security systems can often interface with home automation systems. AMX's Modero touch-panel line (ABOVE) shows video from rooms around the house.

Pocket Change | Security manufacturer Napco recently introduced the NiteScene keychain (LEFT). The device gives control over a home security system from outside a home, and can turn on certain lights remotely, too. **In Control** | Home security systems from Napco (RIGHT) can give homeowners remote control over aspects of their residence. See Resources.

