



## Tech Ache: Losing the keys to their smart home

Handing over house keys to a new home buyer is a nice moment, signifying an exciting new chapter in the homeowner's life and a successful transaction for the REALTOR®—assuming the key you hand over actually fits the lock.

What happens if the previous owner fails to share the login and passwords that control a smart home? The new homeowner could be locked out of the heat thermostat or stuck in the garage because they don't know the login to the app that opens and closes the door.

### Wall to wall devices

In today's homes there is hardly any device, machine, or gizmo that can't be programmed and controlled automatically or remotely—everything from the oven to the cat door, from the motion lights to the sprinkler system. Many home buyers view these digital conveniences as a big plus, unless they move in and realize that the control was hauled off along with the sofa and the golf clubs of the previous owner.

Normally the smart tech products are from several different manufacturers and often linked through connecting hubs such as Amazon Alexa or Google Home. Home devices are often tied to cloud services that use password protected accounts—each one registered to the previous homeowner.

### Turning up the heat

A new owner may have to change the login details in several different ways, and not all will necessarily be easy and straightforward. The previous owner may have had to de-register their accounts for those devices first, depending on the manufacturer's instructions.

As one blogger put it: “If the smart thermostat stops working during the transition and the pipes freeze—is that covered by the seller?” Interesting question.

### **Digital access**

The issue came to the attention of one of our own Board members when a new homeowner was unable to control two light dimmers in her new home because the manual control switches were beyond reach behind a large appliance. Without the login for the app of the previous owner, she couldn’t control those lights. The member wrote to our board suggesting that there could be a contractual clause included to address smart home access along the lines of:

*“SMART HOME EQUIPMENT: The Seller(s), to the best of their knowledge will disclose to the Buyer(s), prior to the acceptance of this offer, if the Seller(s) are aware if anything in the home (lights, appliances, etc.) operates with a smart phone app or otherwise.”*

In the meantime, home technology blogger Jay Basen provides practical advice on how smart home technology can be successfully transferred to a new owner in his blog, [Selling your smart home? How will it work for the new owner?](#) published on a US-website called *Residential Tech Today*.

You may find that the special moment between a Realtor and a homebuyer will no longer be handing over a metal key, but a list of passwords.

