

Crime Prevention Tips Preventing Auto Theft

Auto theft (“UUMV”, or “Unauthorized Use of a Motor Vehicle” in police speak) is one of the most common crimes committed in the United States. Many times, vehicle owners inadvertently do (or fail to do) things that aid thieves who take vehicles.

The most common reasons vehicles are stolen include:

- “Joyrides”. Stealing a vehicle for their personal use. Often juveniles are the suspects in this type of offense.
- Re-selling the vehicle for parts. Often, a vehicle is more valuable when broken down and sold for parts than it is whole. This is the reason older vehicles are stolen, as older vehicle’s parts become more expensive as a model year ages, and parts become more scarce.
- To use a vehicle to commit another crime. Often, criminals who commit robberies and other violent crimes will use a stolen vehicle to help conceal their identity (in case a witness reports the license plate of the suspect’s vehicle).

Things that may attract a thief:

- Leaving the keys to the vehicle inside, especially in plain view
- Leaving a vehicle unlocked, or with the windows down
- Parking in areas with poor visibility (not lighted, or hidden from public view)
- Leaving a vehicle running and unattended. Often, in hot or cold weather, owners will leave a vehicle in their own driveway running, and a thief will steal the vehicle from an owner’s own residence.

Things You can do to help prevent your vehicle from being stolen:

- Don’t leave your keys in your vehicle. Probably the #1 way to help make it harder for your vehicle to be stolen

- Lock your vehicle and close your windows completely. Yes, it's easy to break a window, but that makes noise, and most criminals don't want to sit on broken glass to drive or ride in a vehicle.
- At home, if you have a garage, park your vehicle inside.
- In public areas, if a parking lot with an identified parking attendant (i.e. an attendant with a uniform or an ID that he works for the parking company) is available use it. Most criminals don't want a witness around if they try to steal a vehicle.
- When parking your vehicle on a street ("parallel parking"), turn your front wheels toward the curb. This makes it harder, but not impossible to tow.
- Consider a service, such as LOJACK or ONSTAR that can track a vehicle if it's reported stolen. Such services, working in conjunction with law enforcement, have a very high recovery rate of stolen vehicles.
- Keep information, such as the make, model, model year, license plate and VIN (Vehicle Identification Number) easily accessible by you in the event your vehicle is stolen. Often, insurance ID cards will have a vehicle's VIN listed on the card. Once an officer takes a UUMV (stolen vehicle) report from a citizen, that information is placed on a national crime database. If the license plate is checked by law enforcement anywhere in the United States, its status as stolen is returned to officers. Without either the license plate or VIN, it is much harder to instantly identify a vehicle as stolen.
- Report suspicious activity to 911.

Remember that YOU are an important partner in the fight against crime.