

# Vehicle Security

Although a professional car thief can defeat most security measures and quickly break into and steal a locked vehicle, most vehicle break-ins and thefts are carried out by amateurs who take advantage of the carelessness of drivers in leaving vehicles unlocked, valuables in sight, etc. The tips in this section will significantly enhance the security of your vehicles.

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## Preventing Theft or Break-ins

The following tips help prevent vehicle break-ins, which could lead to theft of the vehicle itself or of property items from the vehicle.

- Park in open, well-lighted, and populated areas near your destination, preferably one in view of a security camera. Avoid parking near trucks, vans, dumpsters, and other objects that obstruct visibility and provide hiding places. Avoid parking near strangers loitering or sitting in vehicles.
- Park in lots or garages where you don't have to leave your keys.
- Park in your garage, if you have one. Don't leave your vehicle on the street, in an alley, or on your driveway. If you have to park on a street, avoid dark or isolated areas.
- Turn off your engine, roll up all windows, lock all doors, and take your keys with you even if you are making a quick stop at a store or gas station, or even in your driveway. Close all windows and lock the trunk and hood.
- Don't leave spare keys in your vehicle. An experienced thief knows all the hiding places. Store spare keys in your wallet.
- Don't leave your vehicle in an unattended public lot for an extended period time.
- Buy a vehicle with interior hood and trunk lock releases. Install a secondary hood lock if your car does not have one.
- Replace knob-type door lock buttons with tapered ones.
- Install an alarm system that will sound when someone attempts to break in, move, tilt, or start your vehicle. Always activate the system when leaving the vehicle.
- Check your vehicle if you hear the alarm sound. But don't try to stop a person attempting to break in. Get a good description of the person and call the police.
- Lock your vehicle with the door lock button inside your vehicle instead of with your remote control. Thieves are now able to pick up the signals from your remote when you lock your vehicle with it.

## To prevent theft of cars, SUVs, and light trucks:

- Turn your wheels sharply toward the curb when parking on a street.

- Use anti-theft devices that can be attached to the steering wheel or column, or brake pedal. Use one every time you leave your vehicle unattended. Steering wheel locks are inexpensive and are recommended by some experts to be the most cost-effective theft deterrent on the market today.
- Install fuel or power cut-off switches.
- Buy a vehicle with a locking ignition or steering column.
- Chain motorcycles and bicycles to stationary objects when unattended.
- Consider having your VIN (Vehicle Identification Number) etched on all the windows.

#### **To prevent the theft of motorcycles:**

- Park your bike in the garage when at home. Park in a well-lighted area when out, preferably in view of a security camera.
- Try to avoid parking between larger vehicles as they provide cover for thieves.
- Chain your bike to a secure, immovable object when unattended. Loop the chain through the frame and make sure it is tight around your bike.
- Install an alarm and a hidden kill switch.

#### **To prevent the theft of property from a vehicle:**

- Never leave anything of value in plain sight. Remove all cellular phones, audio systems, computers, packages, sports equipment, cameras, purses, wallets, firearms, etc. Never lock anything in the trunk after you park. Thieves may be watching. Put valuables in the trunk before you park. But never leave anything you can't afford to lose, e.g., a wallet, credit card, or laptop computer, in your trunk. Take them with you.
- Make sure that any valuables that were locked in the glove box or trunk were not taken or tampered with when you return to your vehicle. Thieves are able to get into some vehicles without leaving any visible signs of a break-in.
- Take the removable face of your CD player with you even if you are going to be gone for a few minutes.
- Lock truck-bed toolboxes.
- Install locking devices on batteries, wheels, audio equipment, etc.
- Make several slices through your license plate registration sticker after it has been placed on the plate. If the plate or sticker is stolen, call the DMV (Department of Motor Vehicles) immediately to report the loss and get replacements.

#### **Recovering a Stolen Vehicle or Property Taken from a Vehicle**

- Call the police immediately and provide a complete description of the vehicle and any property taken from it, including a stolen license plate. Call **911** if the theft is in progress. Otherwise call **(760) 352-2111**, the ECPD's non-emergency number. Vehicles should be described by: year, make, model, color(s), VIN, insurance company and policy number, license plate number and state, and name of any tracking and locator system installed in the vehicle. Property should be described

by type, make, model, serial number, and fair market value. (It is important to report all vehicle crimes to the ECPD even if the loss is small and you are not planning to file an insurance claim. This enables the Department to assess the magnitude and nature of the problem and assign prevention, patrol, and enforcement assets accordingly.)

- Etch your driver's license number on all removable valuable items, e.g., audio equipment. Also etch the number on various places on the vehicle itself.
- Don't leave your driver's license in the vehicle.
- Keep a record of the VIN, license plate number, and insurance information in your wallet or purse. Also be able to provide the information listed above for any property that might be stolen from the vehicle.
- Don't leave your vehicle title (pink slip) in the vehicle.
- Install a vehicle tracking and location system that can be activated after the vehicle is reported as stolen.

## **Preventing Vandalism**

- Park in open, well-lighted, and populated areas near your destination. Avoid parking near trucks, vans, dumpsters, and other objects that obstruct visibility and provide hiding places. Avoid parking near strangers loitering or sitting in vehicles.
- Park in your garage, if you have one. Don't leave your vehicle on the street, in an alley, or on your driveway. If you have to park on a street, avoid dark or isolated areas.
- Don't leave your vehicle in an unattended public lot for an extended period time.
- Buy a vehicle with interior hood and trunk lock releases. Install a secondary hood lock if your car does not have one. Also install a locking gas tank cap.

## **Buying a Used Vehicle**

- Be suspicious of a ridiculously low price or a fresh paint job on a late model vehicle.
- Make sure the seller is the owner named on the vehicle title. Don't be afraid to ask to see some photo identification.
- Verify past insurance and financing, and current registration and license plate sticker.
- Make sure the VIN has not been tampered with and matches the number on the vehicle title.
- Obtain both sets of the original keys.
- Make sure registration fees paid to dealer are sent to DMV promptly.