



Minnesota Crime Prevention Association's Crime Prevention Tips

The MCPA strives to bring current information regarding prevention topics to its members. Please use these prevention tips to promote safety to the citizens of your community. These tips are great for brochures, newsletters, e-mails, etc.

Topic: Preventing Theft From Automobiles

Theft from vehicles has increased dramatically over the past several years. Many of these thefts occur when cars are parked in driveways. The popularity of radar detectors, expensive stereo equipment, and cellular phones appear to encourage car prowlers. Any vehicle with a visible cellular phone, radar detector, visible power cord or mount, briefcase, purse, gym bag or other valuables left in sight may be a target. Other property often stolen from vehicles includes:

| | | | | |
|------------|----------------|---|------------|-------------|
| stereos | purses/wallets | checkbooks | sunglasses | equipment |
| cameras | CDs | spare change | auto parts | power tools |
| tool boxes | hand tools | car batteries (especially in colder months) | | |

What Thieves Do With Stolen Property?

Many things can be sold to other thieves or to someone who is looking for a deal. Other times they can be sold for cash at pawnshops. Some thieves look for purses to steal, and then they immediately make large purchases on the credit cards and alter the victim's ID so they, or an accomplice, can forge the checks. This can cause an incredible amount of worry, hassle, and inconvenience for a victim. The thief doesn't care about you, your feelings, or the hardship the theft will put you through. His or her point of view is, "Why should I pay for something when I can steal it?"

Preventing Vehicle Theft - Lock your vehicle and put valuables out of sight, preferably in the trunk or bring them into the house at night. Thieves will break into any vehicle if they think there is something of value to be stolen from it. Thieves know that briefcases may contain checkbooks, wallets, watches, calculators, and other small electronics. Similarly, they are aware that many gym bags contain jewelry, keys, cash, and personal stereos, etc.

After removing valuables from view, lock your car doors. This will discourage some of the more casual thieves, the ones looking for the opportunity to steal. It will also deter those who would go into an unlocked car to look for a trunk or hood release button in order to steal auto parts or the contents of the trunk.

Report suspicious activity while it is happening. This could save you or your neighbor from being victimized. Call 9-1-1 and stay on the line if you see or hear something that seems unusual or suspicious. Try to get a description of the suspects and their vehicle, and do not confront suspects.

Don't think you are bothering the police by calling them to report suspicious activity. It's their job to detect and apprehend criminals, and they need your help because they can't be in everyone's neighborhood 24 hours a day. If your suspicions prove to be unfounded, you shouldn't feel embarrassed. The police prefer that you call them so they can investigate that suspicious activity. It is more desirable to be mistaken than to be a victim!

Additional Security Measures

Outdoor security, such as lighting left on from dusk to dawn, is inexpensive and helps to deter crimes such as theft, vandalism, and burglary. In addition, many citizens are now equipping their cars with alarm systems. In some cases, the value of the vehicle and/or its contents are worth the cost of installation.

You can increase the chances of your property being recovered if it stolen, by recording the serial number and marking items with an Operation Identification number available at no charge from the police department.