

Preventing Auto Burglaries

One crime that citizens can really help police prevent is auto-burglary. **Almost all auto-burglaries have one thing in common: something to steal. That is, something valuable left in the car, often in PLAIN SIGHT of a passing burglar. Many auto-burglaries are "crimes of opportunity".** These crimes can often be avoided if simple preventative steps are taken.

It takes less than 30 seconds to break into a car, grab what is in plain view, check the usual hiding places for other items, and get away. How long would it take you to secure your valuables out of sight? Even less time. Auto-burglary prevention, like all crime prevention, involves limiting the criminal's ability and/or opportunity to commit the crime. With very little time and effort, you can make a huge difference in protecting yourself from auto-burglary. We suggest taking these simple but important steps to avoid being a victim.

- **LOCK YOUR DOORS!** Thieves will canvass a neighborhood during the night trying every car door and ransack all that are unlocked. It's a numbers game for them. **Sometimes just locking your door can deter a theft.**
- **Don't leave valuables in your car.** That sounds like "common sense", but drivers/passengers do leave items of value in plain sight every day. If you leave valuable items visible in your car, your car is automatically a target. Thieves are targeting purses, laptops, GPS units, tablets, cell phones and even weapons, which are easily sold.
- Additionally, computers, purses and wallets are highly desired targets that are stolen, to commit identity theft.
- If you must leave valuable items in your car, place items out of sight before reaching your destination or move them inconspicuously. Someone may be watching when you put items under a seat or throw something over them. An opportunistic thief is on the lookout for trunk-packing, and can break into your car the minute you're out of sight. One reason SUVs and pickups are common targets is because they don't have a "trunk" to hold valuables — the driver/passenger generally just "hides" their valuables "out of sight". The thieves know this, and do check glove compartments, behind seats, and under seats. It only takes a few seconds to check all the "usual" hiding places.
- When shopping at multiple locations, lock your bags in the trunk before moving to your next destination. Never open a trunk, fill it full of valuables, close it, and then just walk away.
- Once home, unload your valuables immediately. Do not store valuables in your car any longer than necessary, and certainly never overnight.
- If your trunk can be opened from inside your car without a key, lock this feature when you are not in your car or have it disabled.
- Whenever possible, don't leave any "sign" that there might be valuables hiding in your vehicle. **Items such as docking stations or connector cables in plain sight may be all a thief needs to smash your window and check your hiding places.**
- If you have an after-market stereo/CD-player with a removable faceplate, remove it. Without the faceplate, the unit is less attractive/useful to many thieves, and harder to "fence"
- **Try to park in busy, well-traveled areas and well-lighted areas.** Large anonymous lots are hit by thieves much more often than parking immediately adjacent to residential housing or other occupied buildings. Auto-burglars prefer breaking into cars where they will not be observed or attract attention, and choose their targets accordingly.
- **Set any alarm or anti-theft device. If you have one,** use it! Many people believe that car-alarms no longer make a difference, but they can be an effective deterrent to an auto-burglar, who most often chooses the easiest target.
- Don't think your dark tinted windows will hide your valuables. Thieves often use flashlights to see through tint, and after-market tint is handy to keep all the broken glass in one "sheet" when they break out your window (and toss the broken window into your back seat or passenger seat to hide the evidence of the break-in from a passersby).
- Don't use "hide-a-keys." Thieves know the best places to hide those.
- Remember, just "locking" isn't enough. Keep your car OFF the target list of the thieves by keeping all hints of valuables totally out of sight. If they see something tempting, they certainly can break in.
- **As a last line of defense (not really to prevent theft as much as to aid in recovery), mark your valuables. Recording serial numbers is important so the stolen items can be entered into a Nation-wide stolen property system.**
- A serial number doesn't directly link you to your stolen property. We'd suggest inscribing/engraving a personal identifier on all valuables. Don't use your social security number (identity theft) — use your driver's license (DL) number, prefaced by your DL "state", such as "CA-N1234567". With that marking, any police officer can trace your valuable back to you,

Report "Suspicious Activity" that would include:

- Persons walking up and down aisles of parking lots looking into cars or trying door handles
- Vehicles cruising parking lots at very slow speeds for extended periods while observing parked cars
- Persons sitting in running parked cars for lengthy periods
- Vehicles dropping one person off while continuing to cruise the same area.

Do NOT confront anyone. Your life is precious; property can be replaced! BE ALERT, BE AWARE, and be prepared to BE A GOOD WITNESS