



## **PROTECTING YOUR VEHICLE**

### **KEEP YOUR VALUABLES AND POSSESSIONS SAFE**

Don't leave anything on display in your car. Even an old coat on the back seat is a temptation for someone to "smash and grab." Thieves steal first and think about value later. Thieves will smash a car window just to look inside a bag or box to see if it contains anything of value. Even if it contains nothing, you will be left with a broken window or door lock. Take all your belongings with you when you leave the car. If you can't, lock them in the trunk, preferably before you start your journey.

Never leave any of the following on display in your car, as they are all particularly attractive to car thieves:

- Cell phones, GPS receivers, laptops and iPods (or any other type of easy to sell electronics)
- Checkbooks, credit cards and debit cards
- Cash (including loose change in the ashtray)
- Vehicle registration documents (these should always be carried on your person)
- Private mail (especially if it has your address on it)
- Wallets and purses

Don't make the mistake of thinking that because you live in a low crime area, you can leave items in your car or leave car doors unlocked.

Don't leave garage door activators in your parked car. Thieves will have easy access to your garage and sometimes your entire home if the door from the garage into your home interior is unsecured.

### **SECURITY DEVICES ARE ALWAYS GREAT WAYS TO SECURE YOUR CAR AND PUT OFF WOULD-BE THIEVES**

Electronic immobilizers (which prevent the car from starting) are a sure way to put off car thieves. Mechanical immobilizers, such as steering-wheel locks, are a good alternative to electronic immobilizers. They are not expensive and are easy to fit yourself. Commonly called clubs, collars, or j-bars, these devices lock to the steering wheel, column or brake to prevent the wheel from being turned more than a few degrees.



Fit locking wheel nuts, as wheels are often a target for car thieves. Wheel nuts are not expensive and are easy to fit.

An alarm can help to keep your car secure but it must be installed professionally to be effective. If you live in a high theft area or drive an automobile that's an attractive target for thieves, you may get a discount from your insurance company.

You should also purchase a locking gas cap. A locking gas cap means the thief won't be able to put gas in your stolen car - shortening his joy ride.

### **KEEP YOUR CAR KEYS SAFE**

When you leave your car, always remove the ignition key and lock all doors. It only takes a few seconds for a thief to jump into your car and drive away. Follow this routine all the time, even when filling your car up with gas or just running into the store for a moment.

On icy mornings, never leave your vehicle unattended with the engine running to warm it up or defrost the windows.

At home, always keep your car keys in a safe place that is out of sight and away from windows and doors.

### **ETCHING**

Arrange to have your car's vehicle identification number (VIN) etched onto all glass surfaces – including the head lamps. This helps discourage professional thieves who have to either remove or replace etched parts before selling your car. Copy the VIN and your tag number on a card and keep it in a safe place. If your vehicle is stolen, the police will need this information.

### **SECURITY MARKING**

Consider marking all your valuables, especially those that you frequently take in your car. Mark items with your ZIP CODE or some other unique identifying number linked to a recognized database. If any of your valuables have serial numbers, keep a note of them in a safe place. This should help the police return your possessions to you if they are stolen and recovered. It also helps to convict criminals. The Police Department's crime prevention officer can give you further information about marking schemes.



## **DOORS AND WINDOWS**

Lock all doors and close all windows and the sunroof every time you leave your car unattended – however briefly. Many cars get broken into in the few seconds that a car is out of the driver’s sight.

You can have special security film installed on your side windows making them difficult to break.

## **CONSUMER ELECTRONICS**

Always remove your in-car electronic equipment, particularly satellite navigation devices and car stereos, if you can – these are the most sought-after items in your car. With satellite navigation equipment, remember also to remove any support cradle and suction pads, and wipe away any suction pad marks on the windscreen and dashboard as thieves will look out for these.

All in-car electronic equipment – whether you can remove it or not – should be permanently marked, in a visible place, with the vehicle’s registration number or some other unique identifying number linked to a recognized database. Make a note of the equipment’s serial number and keep it in a safe place.

Pawn shops are regularly checked for stolen goods by comparing serial numbers. When choosing electronic equipment, look for models with anti-theft security features.

## **STOLEN GOODS**

A lot of stolen items are sold to the public. If you are offered a “bargain,” you could be buying something that has been stolen. Stick to reputable shops and dealers. If you have any information about criminal activity, particularly concerning cars stolen for spare parts or items stolen from cars and then sold to the public, you can contact the Greenville Police Tip Line at (864) 271-4273 or Crime Stoppers at 23-CRIME (232-7463). You do not have to give out your name.

## **PARKING**

If you have a garage at home, use it. Always lock your car and garage. If you don’t have a garage, always try to park in a well-lit, open place. Thieves always like to steal from cars parked in places where they run the least risk of being seen. When you park your car away from home, always try to avoid places that:



- Are unattended
- Have easy access
- Are concealed from public view
- Have many escape routes

When parking in a lot, try not to park next to trucks or other large vehicles which block the view of your car.

When you leave your car with a parking attendant, leave just the ignition key with the attendant. Make sure no personal identification is attached. Do the same when you take your car in for repairs.

## **SELLING YOUR CAR YOURSELF**

When selling your car privately, it is worth remembering that thieves can pose as potential buyers. Never let the buyer go on a test drive alone. They may not come back. Don't leave the buyer alone with your keys in the ignition. Be careful about accepting checks or banker's drafts. If they are fraudulent or counterfeit you will lose the money. If in doubt, contact your bank.

## **WHAT ABOUT CAR-JACKING?**

Car-Jacking (stealing a car by force) has captured headlines in the last few years. Statistically, your chances of being a victim of a car-jacking are very slim, and the following preventive actions can reduce the risk even more:

- Approach your car with your key in hand and look around inside before getting in
- When driving, keep your doors locked and your windows rolled up at all times
- Never roll down your window to a suspicious person
- Be especially alert at intersections, gas stations, ATMs, shopping malls, convenience stores and grocery stores--all are windows of opportunity for car-jackers
- Park in well-lighted areas with good visibility, close to walkways, stores and people
- If someone attempts to force their way into your car, blow the horn
- If the car-jacker has a weapon, give up the car with no questions asked. Your life is worth more than a car.
- If you think you are being followed, do not drive home. Drive to the nearest police or fire station or any well lit store or gas station.



## **WHAT IF MY CAR IS STOLEN?**

If your car was just stolen, call 911 immediately. Be prepared to give the 911 operator your vehicle information, the address of where it was taken from and any information you may have on the suspects and their direction of travel. If your vehicle was taken, but you don't know when it occurred, report it to the desk officer at 467-5258. You must have your vehicle information ready to give the officer. If your vehicle has any unique markings, damage or parts (like custom wheels), this will help in locating your vehicle.

Your vehicle will be entered into NCIC (a nation-wide stolen vehicle data base) and a BOLO (be on the lookout alert) will be immediately broadcast to all city police units.

Anytime an officer anywhere in the U. S. does a traffic stop or comes across a suspicious or abandoned vehicle, the vehicle tag will be run through the national data base to determine if the vehicle is stolen. If the tag comes back "clear" but does not match the vehicle's registration on which it is displayed, the officer will check the VIN to determine if the vehicle is stolen.

If your vehicle is recovered by law enforcement, you will be contacted immediately and given the information on how to retrieve your vehicle.

Sometimes an owner of a stolen vehicle happens to recover their own vehicle. If this occurs you must contact the agency with whom you reported the vehicle stolen so the vehicle can be removed from the NCIC database. Failure to do so could result in an officer performing a felony traffic stop upon seeing the vehicle being driven on the roadway and not knowing the vehicle is no longer stolen. Should this occur, it will not be a pleasant experience for whomever happens to be driving the vehicle.

## **WHAT IS A BREACH-OF-TRUST VEHICLE?**

If you gave your permission for someone to borrow your vehicle and they failed to return the vehicle as promised, that is known as a breach of trust. It is NOT a stolen vehicle. You can still report it to the police and we will attempt to recover the vehicle. Under no circumstances should you lead the police to believe the vehicle was stolen. Doing so not only could lead to you being charged with filing a false police report, but it could result in an innocent person being harmed since the police will use tactics necessary for handling a felony level crime instead of a simple breach of trust situation.