

Auto Theft, Auto Burglary and "Car-Jacking" crimes are on the increase across the nation. With the rise in car-jacking, auto theft is no longer just a property crime; serious injury and even death can result from a confrontation. The following are theft prevention tips that may help you deter a thief:

KEYS

- Always lock your car
- Never hide your keys on, under or near your car.
- Never put the vehicle identification with keys in case they are dropped in a parking lot or store.
- Pocket your keys while at the gas pump.
- NEVER leave your car idling, not even for just a moment.
- If you use valet parking, leave only the keys necessary to park and secure your car. Remove house keys, trunk and glove box keys unless necessary.

PARKING

- Park in well lighted places, away from bushes.
- Places where there is a lot of foot traffic deters thieves and burglars
- Turn wheels sharply to curb to make it hard to tow away.
- Hide or remove all valuables (purses, cameras, etc.) to avoid inviting burglars.

ANTI-THEFT DEVICES

Alarms, ignition kill-switches, steering wheel locks, just to name a few, are designed to make the theft of your car more difficult. Most recently, computer chips have been added to your car key to prevent unauthorized starting of the engine, and devices that can be installed in your car which can be tracked by police if the car is stolen. These all decrease your odds of becoming a victim, but none should replace common sense.

CAR-JACKING

"Car-jacking" is nothing more than stealing a car by threat or use of force. Like any other crook, the car-jacker is looking for the easiest target. Some of the things you can do to reduce your chances of becoming a victim are:

- When approaching your car, be aware of your surroundings. If suspicious persons are near your car, walk past and go back to a safe area.
- Have your keys ready when you get in your car, to avoid fumbling in a strange parking lot.
- If the car is unexpectedly unlocked or open, do not get in. Call for help.
- Once in your car, lock all doors and close all windows.
- If approached by a stranger after you are in your car, do not open a door or window, drive away, and sound your horn if you feel threatened.
- While driving, avoid areas that concern you. Keep your car in good repair and full of gas.
- Allow room to maneuver between you and the vehicle in front of you. Do not open doors or windows for strangers.
- If someone attempts to stop you, or causes an accident where you do not believe it is safe to stop, drive to an area you feel safe, such as an occupied gas station, police station, etc.
- If an unmarked police car attempts to stop you and you are not sure it is a police officer, obey all traffic signals, signal to the officer your intentions and drive to an area you believe it is safe to stop, such as an open convenience store, police station, etc.

It is recommended that you keep the identifying information about your vehicle in your wallet or purse. This will provide responding officers with the necessary information to begin looking for your vehicle in the event it is stolen. Recommended information to have is the Make, Model, License number, and VIN (Vehicle Identification Number) of the vehicle that was stolen.

