



Vehicle Security Tips

The Next Time You Leave Your Car, Leave it Empty

Criminals love to go window shopping. They walk down neighborhood streets or go through shopping center parking lots looking through the windows of parked cars to see what people have left behind.

All too often, those thieves are given an opportunity: a car owner has left some valuables - maybe gifts for a loved one - in clear view. It takes only seconds for the criminal to break the car window and take off with the merchandise.

Don't give thieves that kind of opportunity. Make sure you leave nothing of value in plain view in your car. Take valuables away with you, or put them in the trunk. If you own a sport utility vehicle, cover your valuables.

Remember, when you leave your car, leave it empty. And the thief will leave empty handed.

Car Cigarette Lighters Can Send a Big Message, Be Careful!

In crime prevention, as in many other parts of life, little things can mean a lot. Take, for example, a car's cigarette lighter. It may not look like much to you, but it can send an important signal to thieves.

Some criminals look at the dashboards of cars. If they see the cigarette lighter is missing, they figure there is at least a possibility that it has been taken out to accommodate a battery charger or power adapter for a cell phone. They're willing to take a chance that the cell phone is not far away - maybe stored in the glove box. So, when they don't see a cigarette lighter in a car, some thieves will break the passenger side window, and open the glove box, hoping to find a cell phone inside. If you don't have a cell phone, the criminal will just move on, looking for another opportunity. But he - or she - has left behind a mess of broken and shattered glass for you to clean up, and a colossal headache until you get the car repaired.

Don't give criminals an opportunity. Whether or not you have a cell phone, keep that cigarette lighter just where it belongs when you leave your car. If you do, you're much less likely to encounter a rude surprise when you come back.

Lock Your Car and Block a Thief

It may take you only a minute to run into a convenience store for a cup of coffee or a morning paper. But if you leave your keys in the car with the motor running, it takes a thief only seconds to drive off with your car.

A surprising number of people, however, do just that: they leave the keys in the ignition, and let the motor run, while they run into the store. That practice wastes gas, doesn't help the environment, and could result in a stolen car. A 1996 survey by the Regional Auto Theft Team showed that 25 percent of stolen cars were taken when the driver left the keys in the ignition.

Leaving your keys behind like that is an open invitation to criminals, so don't give them that opportunity. When you park your car, take the keys - and let the thief take a hike.

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