

THEFT FROM AUTO - IT COULD HAPPEN TO YOU!

In recent years, the crime of Theft From Auto has become a significant problem not only in the City of Philadelphia, but in all major cities and suburbs across the country. There are many reasons for the increase in this type of criminal activity, however, the focus of this bulletin will be awareness and tips on prevention, in order to minimize the instance of this crime.

YOU PROVIDE THE "WINDOW" OF OPPORTUNITY FOR THE THIEF! (Think of your car as an open display!)

What is the thief after? Anything, anything that is visible inside of your car. You have to think of your car as a open display, and it is. Anyone walking down the street can look into you car (open display) and practically see everything that you left inside. If something left inside of you car (open display) even appears to be remotely valuable, the thief will then weigh his or her chances of getting caught, and make a decision. We shall call this "window shopping" by the criminal who is looking for an opportunity. GET INTO THE MIND-SET THAT A PARKED CAR IS NOT SAFE ANYWHERE!

You wouldn't leave your valuable possession outside of your home on the sidewalk, would you? You should keep in mind, you have the same level of security expectation with anything left in you car. Take away the temptation by removing valuable contents and, in most cases, your car will be passed by!

HOW DOES THE THIEF GET INTO YOUR CAR?

Although there are a number of sophisticated ways a thief can use to enter your car, we will focus on the most frequent method, *BREAKING THE WINDOW!* This can be done in many ways, a rock, a hammer, a quick elbow or kick, let your imagination run wild. It takes only a few seconds to break the window, and a few more seconds to reach in and take your valuable possessions. You are then left with the expense of replacing the window, and the loss of your property.

WHAT IS THE THIEF AFTER?

Although an argument can be made that thieves are out to remove your car's sound system, or the contents of the glove compartment, this is not always true. Getting into a car to remove a stereo takes time, this thief is a nervous individual who doesn't want to get caught, minimizing the chances of arrest. In most of the reported cases of theft from auto, valuable contents left in plain view was the target of the thief. Leaving valuables in plain view, attracts thieves by making your car a desirable target. Here is an example: At the top of the list of items stolen from cars here in Philadelphia, is the popular *CELLULAR CAR PHONES*. Could this have been prevented? You bet!

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO MINIMIZE THEFT FROM AUTO?

First, we all must realize that this crime can happen anywhere, on parking lots, driveways and at curbside. Secondly, remember, ANYONE can see through auto glass easily, **DON'T LEAVE ANYTHING IN PLAIN VIEW!** Park in well lighted areas. Lock valuables in the trunk, temporarily. It is not recommended leaving you valuable possessions locked in the trunk overnight.

If parking in unfamiliar neighborhoods, or shopping areas, take a minute to check that all valuables are out of sight, or removed, *before* your arrival. Remember to lock your car doors, close windows and take your keys! Use a visible anti-theft deterrent such as a steering wheel locking club device. If you have a car alarm, use it. **NEVER EVER LEAVE CAR RUNNING, OR LEAVE CHILDREN IN CAR!** It only takes a minute to safeguard your valuables. Make this a part of your daily routine.

Remember to call 9-1-1 in Philadelphia to report suspicious activity, or a crime.

**For Further Information Contact:
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