



## **AUTO BURGLARY PREVENTION TIPS:**

**DON'T LEAVE VALUABLES IN YOUR CAR.** That sounds like "common sense", but drivers/passengers do leave items of value in plain view every day. If you leave valuable items visible in your car, your car is automatically a target. If you choose to leave for car open do not leave anything in it – not even your registration.

**If you must leave valuable items in your car while out and about, place items out of sight before reaching your destination or move them inconspicuously.** This includes packages, backpacks, gym bags, GPS units, MP3 players, and so forth. 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. If you can't take them with you, at least **lock** the items in your glove compartment (*if capable of locking and large enough*) or your trunk (*if you have one*).

**LEAVE NO TRACE.** Don't leave **any** "sign" that there might be valuables "out of sight" in your vehicle, such as docking stations, phone chargers or connector cables. Leave nothing in "plain sight" that might make your vehicle worth "investigating" by a thief; not even loose coins or a CD.

**TRY TO PARK IN BUSY, WELL-LIGHTED AREAS.** Try to park in well-traveled 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 notice, and choose their targets accordingly.

**LOCK ALL YOUR VEHICLE'S DOORS** even if you plan to be gone for only a brief time. Every year, we have items stolen from unlocked vehicles where the owner was only going to be gone "just for a second". It only takes seconds to steal your stuff! It's not at all uncommon for thieves to walk down a row of parked vehicles and check vehicle doors to see if they are unlocked. Don't leave **any** window open or even cracked open, including vent/wing windows and sunroofs.

**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. If they have two cars to choose from, one with an alarm and one without, they will likely burglarize the one without (*unless you've left out valuables just too good to ignore!*)

### **WHAT ITEMS ARE MOST COMMONLY STOLEN FROM VEHICLES?**

- Backpacks, gym bags, briefcases, day-planners
- Cash/coins, checkbooks and credit/debit cards
- Wallets and purses (*even when hidden under a seat or in an unlocked glove compartment*)
- Laptop computers, iPods and MP3 players, (*and docking stations*)
- Cell phones (*and chargers*)
- Portable GPS navigation systems
- Stereo/CD players (*and faceplates*), amps, speakers (*even when bolted down!*)
- Jewelry, keys, mail (*identity theft*), tools

- **Anything** of obvious value

### **MARK YOUR VALUABLES!**

As a last line of defense (*not really to prevent theft as much as to aid in recovery*), mark your valuables. Record all serial numbers, even though many serial numbers are on removable "labels", rather than "engraved" into the valuable items. 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-B1234567". With that marking, any police officer can trace your valuable back to you, wherever it's recovered, and the chances of being reunited with your stolen valuables is dramatically increased.

### **WHAT TO DO IF SOMETHING IS STOLEN OUT OF YOUR CAR**

As soon as you notice something's stolen (*or that your car has been broken into*) do not touch/adjust anything in, on, or around the car. As soon as possible, call the police to report the incident. This can be done online: <http://www.cityofsantacruz.com/index.aspx?page=1131>

### **REPORT SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY**

If you see suspicious activity, CALL 911.

"Suspicious Activity" would include:

- Persons walking up and down the street and/or parking lots looking into cars or trying door handles.
- Vehicles cruising the street and/or parking lots at very slow speeds for extended periods while observing parked cars.
- Persons making any kind of mark or placing anything on parked vehicles
- Persons sitting in running parked cars for protracted periods, and vehicles dropping one person off while continuing to cruise the same area. We'd prefer to check on an innocent citizen going about their business than to not check and end up taking theft-from-vehicle reports.

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