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**PUBLIC SAFETY BULLETIN #6**

**VEHICLE AND PARKING LOT SECURITY**

Many car thieves and burglars are drug addicts and/or belong to crime rings or gangs, many times working in pairs to scope out a parking garage or lot for an easy target. Frequently, one criminal will drive around a garage or parking lot; the other will walk looking for vehicles that have valuables out in the open. Most use cell phones and radios to communicate with each other to alert the other of police or a passerby. Two out of three cars usually have something of value left out in the open!

What can you do? Prevention Is the Key!

* Don’t leave valuables in your car – this is what the criminal is looking for! Thieves are targeting purses, laptops, GPS units and MP3 players, which are easily sold. Additionally, computers, purses and wallets are highly desired targets that are stolen to commit identity theft.
* 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. One reason SUVs and pickups are common auto-burglary targets is because they don’t have a “trunk” to hold valuables — the driver/passenger generally just “hides” their valuables “out of sight”. The thieves know this, and do check glove compartments, behind seats, and under seats.
* Never open a trunk, fill it full of valuables, close it, and then just walk away.
* If your trunk can be opened from inside your car without a key, lock this feature when you are not in your car or have it disabled.
* If possible, leave no trace. Don’t leave any “sign” that there might be valuables “out of sight” in your vehicle, such as docking stations or connector cables. Just leaving an empty docking station in plain sight, even if you’ve taken the high dollar component with you, may end up costing you hundreds of dollars to replace a broken window because the thief wanted to check your car for “hidden” valuables.
* Try to park in busy, well-traveled areas and well-lighted areas. Large anonymous lots are hit by thieves much more often than parking lots that are 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. Many valu- able items are stolen from unlocked vehicles where the owner was only going to be gone “just for a second”. 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 – believe it or not at least 30% of all vehicles parked in a garage or parking lot are unlocked! Don’t leave any window open or even cracked open, including vent/wing windows and sun roofs.
* Set any alarm or anti-theft device.
* Don’t use “hide-a-keys”. Thieves know the best places to hide those.
* Mark your valuables. Recording serial numbers is important so that the stolen items can be entered into a Nation-wide stolen property system.

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