

PUBLIC SAFETY BULLETIN: How to Prevent Car Break-ins

It's one of the most infuriating things that can happen to a car owner - and it's one of the most common forms of larceny in the United States: the "smash-and-grab" car break-in. Theft from motor vehicles is the fastest growing crime in every major city in the nation. The thieves do not even steal your whole car, just the valuable items in it - which you then must painstakingly replace, while dealing with the arduous and costly car repair process.

While there is no way to 100% deter these kinds of thieves, there are some common-sense steps you can take to make your vehicle a much less appealing target. Above all, thieves look for opportunities. Make them "work" for their pilfered prizes, and they will most likely just forget it and move on to an easier target.



FULTON
INDUSTRIAL



BOULEVARD
IMPROVEMENT
DISTRICT

Theft Prevention Starts Before You Even Leave Your Vehicle

Smash-and-grab thieves typically are not criminal masterminds who craft clever schemes to swipe your stuff. Most are casual opportunists. They see something they like, so they break in and take it. Before you get out of your car, make sure your valuables are out of sight. Never leave these items lying on your seats, dashboard or floor:

- Phone
- Purse or wallet
- Laptop (or its bag)
- Briefcase or backpack
- Shopping bags
- Boxes
- Small electronics
- CDs
- Cash - even loose change
- Your keys

Car Smash-and-Grabs Happen Out of Sight

Most thieves go solo. The last thing they want is a crowd of onlookers with cellphones and pepper spray ready to be used. So, try to keep your car highly visible by parking near other people. Park in busy lots where there is plenty of pedestrian and vehicle traffic. If you are away from your car after dark, park in a well-lit area or near a lamppost. And when possible, choose a lot with an attendant over one without.

Discourage Thieves With Anti-theft Measures

Thieves are also lazy. With car break-ins, thieves are usually not looking for a huge payoff. What this type of thief wants is a quick thrill - or maybe a little extra revenue - for as little work as possible. Make your car a harder target by making it less desirable:

- Always lock your doors and roll up your windows when you park.
- Activate your security system if you have one.
- Consider window tinting (if permitted by local laws), since it makes casing your car more difficult.
- Use after-market measures, like mechanisms that lock the steering wheel, to protect your car and alert thieves that you have taken extra security measures.
- Do not use the console or glove box as mobile lock boxes. These are obvious to thieves, too.
- Do not leave keys in your car.

Most smash-and-grabbers do not take the vehicle itself; however, there is always the chance that a key on the dash or in the ignition may motivate the more daring into outright auto theft. Also, remember that if you have a great hiding place for a key - say, in your wheel well or above the sun visor - a thief has also thought of it. Therefore, when you are away from your car, keep your keys away from it, too, preferably with you.

Beware of a Watchful Eye

While your trunk is better than the passenger area for shopping bags and laptops, an experienced thief will often stake out a parking lot and watch you transfer your things there. So, before you get to where you will be leaving your car unattended, move your valuables to the trunk or to wherever they are out of sight. See suspicious activity? Trust your instincts and do not park there. And never confront anyone yourself. If you are concerned, report your suspicions to an attendant or the police. Again, theft is often an opportunity. If someone breaks into your car and realizes they can steal your vehicle as well as your valuables, you face a much larger loss.



5 THINGS YOU SHOULD ALWAYS DO FOR CAR THEFT PROTECTION:

- Always lock your vehicle, even while driving.
- When parked, leave all windows - including the sunroof - closed.
- Know where you are going and plan routes that avoid high-crime areas whenever possible.
- Park in well-lit areas.
- Never leave your car unattended if it's running.

Frank J Mazzilli | Public Safety Manager
 404.328.5246
 frank@boulevardcid.org
 www.boulevardcid.org

FULTON
INDUSTRIAL



**BOULEVARD
IMPROVEMENT
DISTRICT**