



CRIME PREVENTION BULLETIN

MOTOR VEHICLE THEFTS

Purpose

We hope that some information about thefts of motor vehicles, and thefts from motor vehicles, will help you reduce the likelihood that you will become a victim of such a crime. There are steps you can take to make yourself and your vehicle a harder target for these criminals. We also want to provide some ideas that we hope will help you in recovering your property if it is stolen. These steps will also help us in locating offenders, and bring forth criminal prosecution in these cases.

Introduction

According to the FBI Uniform Crime Report (UCR), nationally there are an estimated \$4.5 billion dollars lost annually due to thefts of Motor Vehicles. There were an estimated 737,142 motor vehicles stolen in 2010. In addition, it is hard to estimate how much financial loss annually occurs due to the thefts of items stolen from inside motor vehicles, but we believe it would be a very large number. Locally the Lafayette Police Department investigates approximately 200 cases of Motor Vehicle Theft annually. In addition to that, we take approximately 700 reported cases annually of thefts of items from inside and outside motor vehicles (wheels, stereos, purses, book bags, cell phones etc.).

Generally speaking, most of these crimes are occurring because criminals find profit in committing these crimes. Some stolen items, and stolen vehicles, are converted to personal use, but money drives most of these crimes. Vehicles are often resold for profit, sometimes with altered VIN numbers. Vehicles can be stripped of their parts and sold to anyone willing to pay for these items. There is a big market for Airbags, Catalytic Converters, and other components, stolen from personally owned motor vehicles.

Theft of Motor Vehicles

For many different reasons, some motor vehicles are more likely to be stolen than others. This influences insurance rates, and what you pay for your insurance premiums. To reduce the likelihood of you becoming a victim of motor vehicle theft, we offer the following suggestions.

- Do not leave your car running unattended or leave the keys in the vehicle when you are not in it.
- Lock your car when it is unattended. Do not make it easy for someone to take your car.
- Car alarms can serve as a deterrent, but you need to weigh the cost vs. benefit ratio.
- Park in areas that are well lit and close to buildings or windows where others see your vehicle.
- Do not leave a spare key "hidden" where someone else may find it.
- Check your plate to make sure it is still on the vehicle, and that it hasn't been replaced.

- Steering wheel locks are available but easily defeated by many car thieves today.
- Use anti theft devices available such as chip embedded keys and vehicle shutoff switches.
- Do not park next to large vehicles which can “hide” your vehicle from casual observation.
- Use a valet key if you must leave your vehicle with someone.
- If you have a garage, use it as often as you can.

If your vehicle is stolen, report it promptly to authorities. For each vehicle you own, you should be able to quickly provide the:

- ✓ Make and Model
- ✓ Vehicle Year
- ✓ Registration number (plate)
- ✓ Vehicle Identification Number (VIN)
- ✓ Vehicle Color
- ✓ Insurance Company information and Agent
- ✓ Any identifying characteristics specific to your vehicle

Thefts from Motor Vehicles

This is one of the most preventable crimes that the Lafayette Police Department investigates on a regular basis. Most of these crimes occur because the criminal sees something in the vehicle that they want. There are instances where criminals will break a vehicle window of a locked vehicle to get what they see in plain view. As a general rule, we do not see vehicle windows broken so a criminal can randomly search for property in a vehicle when property is not a plain view. We offer the following suggestions to minimize your victimization of a theft from a motor vehicle.

- Do not leave valuables in the vehicle where people can clearly see them.
- Do not leave electronic items on the dash or in the window (GPS units for example)
- Do not leave purses, book bags, laptops, wallets, cameras, or other items in view.
- Place recently acquired packages in the trunk when leaving the vehicle unattended.
- Park in areas that are well lit, and seen by casual observation.
- Install a vehicle alarm based on careful consideration of this option.
- Properly record the serial numbers of specific property to assist in their identification.
- Check your surroundings before exiting for suspicious persons or other suspicious vehicles.
- Lock your vehicle when it is unattended.
- If you have a garage, use it as often as you can.

For Business Owners

You can help by making sure all security and parking lot lights are in proper working order. Consider surveillance cameras or security attendants when feasible. Design facilities, such as parking structures, which do not inhibit natural surveillance. Specific ingress and egress points, fences or other barriers, and proper landscaping help control vehicle and pedestrian traffic.

So take a moment and ask yourself...

Am I an easy target? Can I reduce my chance of becoming a victim?

The Lafayette Police Department's Crime Prevention efforts are meant to strengthen the partnership between our members, and the community that we serve. We hope that together, we can make our community safer.