

Message From Chief Dan Duncan

Auto Theft Tips

You're running late for work, but your fuel tank is nearly empty and you don't want to risk the long commute without stopping for gas. You pull up to the pump and shut the car off. But, in your haste, you leave your keys in the ignition while you pump gas and run in to pay the cashier. You rush back to find that your car is gone.

Auto theft is so common in the United States that in the short time it will take you to read this article, at least one vehicle will be stolen. Even if you have never been a victim of auto theft, the increased expenses caused by this crime have undoubtedly affected you. As taxpayers, you collectively help pay for increased law enforcement costs. And as insurance consumers, auto theft negatively influences insurance premiums. In addition, there are costs that cannot be measured in dollars. When your car is stolen, your feelings of trust and security are also stolen. And then you have to deal with the inconvenience of replacing your car or finding substitute transportation.

Although no vehicle is 100 percent theft proof, there are things you can do to help prevent your car from being stolen. While a good alarm system or a tracking device is an effective way to thwart thieves, simple common sense is often the best way to avoid becoming a victim of auto theft. Leaving your vehicle running and unattended is a citable offense in Florida. The Melbourne Beach Police Department suggest the following simple precautions:

- Lock your car. Approximately 50 percent of all stolen vehicles were left unlocked.**
- Take your keys. Nearly 20 percent of all stolen vehicles had keys in the ignition.**
- Never hide a second set of keys in your car. Thieves know all the hiding places.**
- Park in well-lit areas. More than half of all vehicle thefts occur at night.**
- Park in an attended lot and leave only the ignition and door key with the attendant.**
- Never leave your car running unattended. Don't consider this even if you'll only be gone for a minute. Vehicles are commonly stolen at convenience stores, gas stations, ATMs, etc. Many vehicles are also stolen on cold mornings when they are left running to warm up the engine.**
- Don't leave children in a running vehicle.**
- Always roll up your windows, close your sunroof, and lock your car. Don't make it easy for a thief to enter your vehicle.**
- Don't leave valuables in plain view. Personal possessions left on the seats or**

- floor of the car make your vehicle a more desirable target.**
- **Park your vehicle with wheels turned in toward the curb to discourage car thieves who use tow trucks to steal vehicles. Using your emergency brake also makes your car harder to tow.**
 - **If you have a garage, use it. Parking your vehicle inside not only protects it from the elements but also protects it from thieves.**
 - **When parked in a garage, lock the garage door as well as your vehicle. By locking both, you greatly improve your chances of deterring a thief.**
 - **Never leave the title to your car in the glove compartment. A thief can use this to sell your stolen car.**