

Watch Your Car

TEXAS AUTO BURGLARY AND THEFT PREVENTION AUTHORITY

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NEWS

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"Watch Your Car Month" Reminds Drivers about Preventing Vehicle Crimes

(Central & Eastern Texas) What is important to you? Is it your family, home, pets, money, security or other possessions? Did you know that if your vehicle is stolen or burglarized, all those things can also be threatened? In other words, crimes against a vehicle may be only the first in a string of criminal acts.

In 2012, reported vehicle thefts in Texas totaled 64,982, which results in a car stolen every eight minutes. Any vehicle is a potential target, and those most stolen are at least four years old. In 2013, the most targeted makes/models in Texas included: 1) Ford Pickup 2) Chevrolet Pickup 3) Dodge Pickup 4) Chevrolet Tahoe 5) Honda Civic.

Vehicle thieves are looking for opportunities. And unfortunately, many drivers aid thefts by leaving doors unlocked and keys inside. Once a vehicle is stolen, a number of additional offenses could take place. The vehicle may be used to commit another crime. It may be operated erratically and involved in an accident. It may be dismantled so the parts can be sold to fund other crimes ranging from drug use to terrorism.

In 2012, reported vehicle burglaries in Texas totaled 221,023, which means parts or contents were stolen every two minutes. Much like thefts involving the entire vehicle, drivers often unintentionally assist burglars with their crimes by leaving belongings visible. Items left behind can result in a number of additional offenses. Keys or garage door openers can provide thieves access to homes, where belongings, money, and personal information could be taken. If a pet or child is left unattended in a vehicle, they could become additional victims of a thief. Items such as purses, briefcases, bags, electronics, clothing, or accessories can be stolen, leading to a financial ruin, identity theft or resale of items to other unknowing victims.

Historically, more vehicle thefts and burglaries occur in Texas during summer months, which is why the Texas Auto Burglary and Theft Prevention Authority (ABTPA) has declared July "Watch Your Car" month. During "Watch Your Car" month, representatives within 29 vehicle crime task forces funded by ABTPA will be working in their communities reminding Texans that they must protect their vehicles and all possessions inside to avoid falling victim to thieves. If drivers are leaving themselves vulnerable to theft, they are encouraged to change their behavior in order to avoid vehicle criminals. In addition, drivers should recognize that thieves want to strike in locations where we are most likely to leave belongings and be separated from our vehicles for longer periods of time. Those places may include homes, malls, gyms, movie theaters, hotels . . . Even places of worship! Anywhere! In other words, thieves are looking for the biggest financial payoff that can be gained in the shortest amount of time and with the greatest ease. So always be aware!

For additional tips on preventing vehicle crime or information on "Watch Your Car", contact your local task force or call 800-CAR-WATCH.

The Texas ABTPA, an office of the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles, has funded law enforcement programs spread across the state to improve, monitor and prevent auto theft. Since then, Texas has seen a 60% reduction in the vehicle theft count. Currently, ABTPA funds 29 task force grant programs a month, allowing state law enforcement officers throughout Texas to focus on the reduction of vehicle crimes rates.