

# Protective Services' Crime Prevention Tips



## Avoid Becoming a Victim of Vehicle Break-ins

The holiday season will soon be upon us. During this busy time of year, it is common to let our guards down and leave items of value unattended in our cars. Along that vein, Protective Services offers the following tips to avoid becoming a victim of vehicle break-ins, a common crime of opportunity.

Imagine you are a thief desperate to make some quick, illegal cash. You locate an unoccupied vehicle parked in an unwatched area. You approach the vehicle and break through just 3mm of tempered glass that makes up one of the side windows. With the window broken, you are free to enter the vehicle and steal whatever items of value you can locate, such as a mobile phone, laptop computer, or bags of just-purchased holiday gifts. You can now sell those items or put them to use. Can you conceive of a simpler and less risky crime?

Of course, as a victim of a vehicle break-in, the loss of your belongings is only the beginning of your problems. In order to enter your car, a thief typically breaks a side window or damages your door's locking mechanism. At a minimum, you will have to pay part or all of the deductible on the comprehensive portion of your auto insurance to make your car whole again. And you will be without your car while it is being repaired.

Consider protecting your vehicle and belongings from break-ins by taking the following precautions while parking your vehicle.

1. Park in a well-lit, well-traveled, highly visible area whenever possible.
2. Roll up all windows, close the sunroof, and lock all doors.
3. Adopt an attitude and expectation that if you leave something of value in your car, it might be gone upon your return. **Take all valuables with you.** Merely covering valuables under a jacket or towel will not prevent their theft. **Leave nothing in plain sight inside your car.** A car with no belongings visible in the passenger compartment will be less likely to tempt a curious thief.
4. If you have no choice but to leave valuables in your car, secure those items in your car's trunk prior to arriving at the location where you will park. If you drive a sport utility vehicle or station wagon, place your belongings in the far rear cargo area and obscure them under a cargo cover.
5. Never trust that your glove compartment is secure storage. A motivated thief can enter a locked glovebox in seconds.

With a few precautions, you can protect your property and minimize your risks of vehicle break-ins.