

## The Facts Are

Each year, more than a million vehicles are stolen in the United States--about one vehicle every 30 seconds.

Car thieves, like home burglars, generally have an easy time of it. Their thievery is made simple by car owners who obligingly leave doors unlocked (in four out of five cases of auto theft) or who leave keys in the ignition (in one out of five cases).

Though professional car thieves have entered the field in increasing numbers, most cars are still taken by amateurs, who can be stopped fairly easily. You can greatly increase your protection against this type of crime by taking the following sensible precautions:

## Reduce Your Risk

- Never leave your keys in an unattended car, even while running a quick errand, and **always** lock your car.
- Potential car thieves often note identification numbers printed on ignition keys and can obtain duplicates through car dealers by presenting the key numbers, posing as the car's owner. Car dealers or locksmiths can punch out these numbers from your keys, eliminating the problem. Before having this done, however, record these numbers in a safe place in case you need duplicates.
- Never attach a tag with your name and address to a key ring. If the keys are lost or stolen, the tag will lead the thief directly to your car--and your home. While you're at it, leave only the ignition key with parking attendant. A dishonest parking lot attendant may have house keys duplicated and sell them, along with your name and address, for a tidy profit.

## Park Carefully

- Avoid leaving an auto unattended in public parking lots for an extended period of time. A car is five times more likely to be stolen from an unattended lot than from the street or an attended lot.
- At night, park in well-lighted areas with pedestrian traffic. Auto thieves don't like working in spots where they are clearly visible.
- Whenever possible, turn wheels sharply toward the curb when parking, making it extra difficult for thieves to tow away your car.

## Operation Identification

- With an electric engraver, etch your driver's license number on CBs, tape decks, cellular phones and similar items. Consider engraving the same number in several places under the hood, on car doors, trunk lid or other conspicuous places so that a positive identification can be made of your vehicle if it is recovered after a theft.
- Record your vehicle identification (VIN) number (usually located on a small metal plate on the dashboard) and store it in a safe place. Consult your owners manual for the location of your VIN number.
- Never leave your driver's license inside the car, and keep the automobile registration out of sight. If you don't, thieves will be able to produce legitimate documents when stopped by police. Remember that the registration must be with you whenever you are driving your car.

## Security Alarms

- Consider the purchase and installation of security devices, such as:
  - Interior hood lock and release.
  - A second ignition switch or "kill switch" which prevents electrical current from reaching the coil or distributor.
  - A steering wheel, gear shift, ignition cover, or other locking devices.
  - A locking gas cap.
  - An alarm device which will activate a siren, horn or lights--or all three--to frighten the thief away before he is able to steal your car.
  - A security device which tracks your stolen car or warns of an intruder.

## A Special Tip

When you park the car, remove CB, tape deck, cellular phone or other valuable possessions from the seat. These items tempt thieves and should be locked in the trunk. If possible, also remove the CB antenna and stow it in the trunk.

- Become a member of the C.A.T. (Combat Auto Theft) program.

## Theft of Other Vehicles

Theft of trucks and recreation vehicles is on the increase. Because they are not always serialized by

the manufacturer, recoveries are few. Mark your vehicle with an identification number such as your driver's license in a conspicuous place.

Thefts of snowmobiles, motorcycles, boats and trailbikes are also increasing. Many of the same precautions that apply to cars and bicycles also apply to recreational vehicles. You may register your bicycle at the San Gabriel Fire Department.

## Lock It

- Lock all doors and roll up windows whenever leaving your vehicle unattended. Be sure vent windows, a favorite means of entry for thieves, are shut tight.
- Take the keys with you.
- Make sure all easy-to-carry items like motors, water skis and camping gear are locked up before leaving your vehicle.
- Vehicles carried on trailers should be secured with a strong chain and padlock.
- When the trailer is not attached to your car, secure it with a heavy chain and lock it to a stationary object.
- Chain your motorcycle to a stationary object such as a lamppost or sewer grating. Even when your motorcycle is in the garage, use a heavy chain and padlock that resists conventional bolt cutters and hacksaw blades.

## What To Do

- If your vehicle is broken into or stolen--inform the police immediately. Stolen vehicles are often used in

the commission of another crime. Quick action by you may not only aid in the recovery of your vehicle, but also prevent its use for illegal purposes.

- Contact your insurance company informing them of the situation and other details they need. Submit to them a copy of the police report.

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**SAN GABRIEL POLICE DEPARTMENT  
CRIME PREVENTION OFFICE  
(626) 451-5455**



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## How to prevent Auto Theft



A program sponsored by the  
**San Gabriel Police Department**  
**Eugene Harris**  
Chief of Police