

Auto Safety

Preventing Theft

A vehicle is stolen every 25 seconds in the United States. Follow these tips to help keep your vehicle safe.

- Remove your keys from the ignition after every use.
- Lock your vehicle, no matter where you are.
- If you must leave your key with a parking attendant, leave only your vehicle's ignition key. Do not leave anything attached to it with your name and address.
- Keep your vehicle keys separate from your house keys.
- Do not park your vehicle in an isolated area where there are few passers-by.
- Always park in secured lots that are well lit and near high traffic areas.
- Always have your keys ready before you reach the car.
- Always look under and around your vehicle before approaching it.
- Check the back seat of your vehicle before entering it and immediately lock the door behind you.
- Copy your tag number and vehicle identification number on a card, and keep it with your driver's license.
- Write your driver's license number on a business card, and drop it down the window slot to serve as identification, in case the VIN is removed.

- Keep your vehicle registration with you when driving, but do not leave it in the car.
- Engrave your driver's license number and state on valuable components such as stereos and cellular phones.
- Etch the vehicle identification number or a code number into your vehicle windows to deter thieves and aid in recovery.
- Consider the use of second layer anti-theft devices such as steering wheel locks and window etchings.
- Keep your garage door opener with you at all times. If your vehicle is stolen, the thief may attempt to get into your home.
- Park with your front wheels turned sharply, this will make your vehicle more difficult to tow away.
- Remove valuables from the vehicle and place them out of view in the trunk.
- If you are being followed, drive to the nearest police station, or populated area, and honk your vehicle's horn.
- Always drive with your doors locked and your windows rolled up.
- Be suspicious of anyone approaching your vehicle, whether passing out leaflets or asking for donations.

Carjacking Attempts

A carjacking can happen anytime a thief sees the opportunity. Learning to recognize the warning signs can help you protect yourself and your vehicle.

- Be ware of intersections, parking garages or lots, self-serve gas stations and car washes, ATMs, highway exit and entry ramps, and any other place where you might slow down or stop.

- If you are rear-ended, check your surroundings before getting out of the car. If the situation makes you feel uneasy, write a description of the vehicle and the tag number, and signal the car to follow you to the nearest police station or populated area. If you do get out of the car, take your keys and wallet or purse, and stay alert.

- If you are involved in a carjacking, do not argue. Your vehicle is always worth far less than your life. Leave the area as soon as possible and report the incident to the police. Remember details of the carjacker's appearance, such as age, sex, race, hair and eye color, clothing, and identifying features such as scars.

Automotive Breakdowns

It is a commonly known fact that vehicles can and do breakdown. Follow these tips to ensure your safety.

- Check your car's tires, oil, and belts. Proper maintenance is essential to preventing breakdowns.
- If your insurance does not include a roadside assistance endorsement, consider joining an automobile association that offers roadside assistance to its members.
- Purchase a cellular phone, which will allow you to call for assistance without leaving your car.
- Make sure you know how to change a tire, and check your spare.
- Plan your route ahead of time, and let someone know where you are going.
- Pack a survival kit with flares, jumper cables, a first-aid kit, bottled water, an extra quart of oil, radiator fluid, a blanket, and road atlas.

Sources:

CAR - Citizens for Auto-Theft Responsibility National Crime Prevention Council