



Lock Criminals Out of Your Car

Spike in Local Auto Burglaries Prompts Palmetto Bay Policing Unit to Share Safety Tips to Thwart Crime

PALMETTO BAY, FLA (MARCH 3, 2010) – Each winter, during the holiday season, the Palmetto Bay Policing Unit provides important information to educate the shopping public on crime-prevention methods. An all-out campaign is waged to encourage people to be aware of their surroundings and keep up their guard against crime. Now that the holidays are a distant memory, many shoppers have slipped back into complacency – making them perfect targets for criminals.

We read daily of the difficulties within the U.S. economy. The unemployment rate is high and many individuals are facing foreclosure. Unfortunately, economic downturn often leads to an increase of crime, as individuals become increasingly desperate and tempted to perform impulse crimes, such as vehicle burglaries. Our Police Unit suggests a very simple way to reduce the incidence of car burglaries: Lock Your Doors! More than half of the recent reports of burglaries to vehicles in the Village indicate that the car was not locked.

Car burglaries are crimes of opportunity. Criminals will park their car at one end of the street and then simply walk down the block to scope out which cars are unlocked. With the advent of electronic car locks, the car alarm will usually not arm itself if the vehicle is not locked by a hand-held clicker. With just a push of a button, you can reduce your chances of being a victim of a vehicle burglary by 50 percent.

Don't 'Bait' Your Vehicle

But, you must also ensure that you do not "bait" your vehicle. Leaving items of value inside your car, such as purses, computer bags, gym bags, cell phones, iPods, etc., are all tasty "bait" for the car burglar. Thieves look in, see the item, and either simply open the door or quickly smash a locked car's window. Within seconds, they get what they want.

Remember, auto alarms alone are not the answer. While car alarms can be somewhat of a deterrent, again, it takes seconds for the criminal to break the window and take your belongings sitting in plain view. By eliminating the "bait," you reduce the chances even more.

Call the Police at 911 7

Okay, so you did everything right and they still broke into your car (sadly, criminals don't give up easy). What do you do next? Call the Police by dialing 911, and until they arrive at the scene, do not touch, disturb, or move anything. Village police will respond and process the scene for possible fingerprints and or other trace evidence, such as DNA, in order to attempt to identify the subjects. Too often, the victim cleans up the car or moves things around to see what is missing,

and, in doing so, contaminates the scene and crucial evidence is lost. Don't worry if the police officer takes your fingerprints in the process; he's taking "elimination prints" – a tool to identify which prints should be present and which ones should not be.

Police Proficiency Training

At the urging of Police Commander Gregory Truitt, all Village Officers assigned to the Unit will be fully trained by the end of summer, 2010, in crime-scene processing (including fingerprint collection techniques). In addition, through a Federal Justice Grant, the Village's General Investigative Unit (GIU) has obtained the latest crime scene equipment to allow them to improve crime-scene photography, documentation, and evidence collection, including wet-surface collection and casting footprints and tire prints. With the introduction of this specialized training and state-of-the-art equipment, Village Officers and Detectives will be better able to identify and prosecute criminals who enter our Village to perpetrate crimes.

Partner with your Police

It takes a partnership to reduce crime: Residents can do their part by staying vigilant and introducing common-sense practices into their every day lives; our police will do their part to patrol neighborhoods, respond quickly to calls for assistance, and investigate all crime scenes in a professional manner. Continue to be aware, be alert, and be cautious – you can help reduce and prevent crime.

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