



Community Services Section Crime Prevention Tips

The purpose of this alert is to inform you about motor vehicle thefts. The Baltimore County Police Department wants to make you aware of this problem, and to provide you with some suggestions that can reduce your chances of being a victim of this type of crime. Law enforcement agencies across the nation recommend the following auto theft prevention points:

- Whether you leave your car for a minute or for several hours, roll up the windows, lock your car, and take the key;
- Carry your registration with you. Don't leave any personal identification documents, keys, or credit cards anywhere in the vehicle;
- Park in busy, well-lit areas;
- Keep packages or valuables in the trunk. If you leave anything in the car, make certain it is covered and out of sight;
- Copy your license plate and vehicle information (VIN) numbers on a card and keep them with you. If your vehicle is stolen, the police will need this information to take a report;
- Consider electronic tracking devices that help police find stolen vehicles;
- Many cars are stolen for parts such as air bags, Global Positioning Systems (GPS), Xenon headlights, and catalytic converters. Car thieves tend to stay away from a vehicle that has had a vehicle identification number (VIN) etched into the doors, windows, windshields, trunk, etc. This makes it difficult for a car thief to market stolen car parts;
- Install a mechanical device that locks the steering wheel, column, or brakes. These devices will deter some criminals;
- Use steering wheel locks and collars that prevent the steering column from being stripped;
- A significant number of cars are stolen during the early morning hours when vehicle owners are asleep. The Maryland Vehicle Theft Prevention Council administers the "Watch Your Car Program", that by consent of a car owner allows a vehicle to be stopped by police between the hours of 1 a.m. and 5 a.m. You can get more information about this program on the web at <http://www.mdautotheft.org/wyc/>
- Organize a community partnership to raise awareness, install anti-theft devices, start an etching program, and encourage participation in the "Watch Your Car Program".

As always, call 9-1-1 if you see anyone attempting to break into a vehicle. Do not intervene, but call 9-1-1 immediately. Note any information such as suspect or vehicle descriptions that may be helpful to police. You can also contact our Crime Information Hotline at 410-583-2309 to get the latest information about crime trends in your community.