

VEHICLE BURGLARY PREVENTION

FIRST DEGREE CRIMINAL TRESPASS

Burglary from a motor vehicle, which is actually defined as first degree criminal trespass in the Colorado Revised Statutes, is a common crime that happens in big cities, small towns and rural areas. First degree criminal trespass includes when a person illegally enters any vehicle he/she does not own with the intent to commit another crime, usually theft. Because of the relative ease and opportunity, first degree criminal trespass incidents happen much more often than home or business burglaries. Desire, ability and opportunity all must exist to support any crime, including first degree criminal trespass. Even though you might not be able to control someone's desire to commit a crime, you can take away or minimize their ability and/or opportunity to commit a crime.

KEY STEPS TO MAKE VEHICLES LESS OF A TARGET & REDUCE RISK OF BECOMING A VICTIM:

1. Lock your vehicle, even if you are making a quick stop at a gas station, convenience store or mini-mall. It may seem obvious, but locking your vehicle can be a major deterrent to burglary. Criminals commonly walk through a parking lot checking car doors to find one that is unlocked or that has a window not fully closed. Close and lock all your car windows, including vent or wind-wing windows. Criminals have tools that can unlock cars even through the smallest opening. Yes, it only takes seconds to break a window, but doing so makes noise – and criminals hate making noise. Also, officers report that in many instances where a victim left their vehicle unlocked (to prevent windows from being broken), the suspect broke the window anyway, expecting the vehicle to be locked.
2. Take care when putting an electronic key-fob into a pocket or purse. The unlock button is sometimes inadvertently pushed, unlocking your car as you walk away from it. If your vehicle is equipped with an alarm system, activate it when you park your vehicle.
3. Secure your belongings. First degree criminal trespass is often a crime of opportunity. Valuables left inside a vehicle in plain sight serve as an open invitation to criminals looking for that opportunity. If a criminal doesn't see anything, they're less likely to break in, and will go to the next vehicle and window shop. Avoid leaving valuables or belongings unattended in your vehicle. If you have a stereo system with a removable face, take it with you when you leave your car. It takes only a few seconds to hide your valuables. Items that tempt criminals include cellular telephones and chargers, pagers, CDs, purses and briefcases, wallets, backpacks, clothing, laptop computers, cameras, sports equipment, tools and even a cup holder full of change.
4. If it's not feasible to take all of your belongings with you, hide them by locking them in a glove compartment, trunk or somewhere unseen through the windows of the vehicle. If you put your valuables on the floorboard or seats and cover them, you might really be broadcasting to a criminal that you have left valuables in your car. Remember to hide valuables BEFORE you park in the place you're leaving your vehicle. If a criminal sees you put a laptop in the trunk, they'll just break into the trunk when you leave. The same advice applies for putting property under a seat. If a criminal sees you reaching under a seat, they'll assume something is under there and break in, looking for that item.

30 - The seconds it takes a criminal to break into your vehicle and steal your valuables!

20 - The seconds it takes to put your valuables into your trunk, out of sight!

5. Pick-up trucks and SUVs are common targets because they don't have traditional trunks in which to lock valuables. Criminals are aware of this and know that these vehicles have a limited number of lockable hiding places for valuables.
6. Park your vehicle wisely. If you have a garage, park your vehicle in it and lock the car and the garage. If you don't have a garage, park in the driveway and consider installing motion activated lighting on your house. When away from home, choose well-lighted parking spaces as near to your destination as possible. Parking your vehicle at the far end of a parking lot to avoid damage from shopping carts or dings from the doors of other vehicles makes your car more appealing to criminals.
7. One of the most effective techniques in modern crime prevention is "natural surveillance," which is normally applied to buildings and area design. But you can use the technique to your advantage by parking in an area where the likelihood is greatest that others will easily see it with the greatest frequency. Criminals do not like to commit crimes in plain view of many people; they obviously prefer seclusion. Criminals don't like witnesses.
8. Be aware of your surroundings. A growing trend among criminals who break into vehicles is the "follow-away" technique. Reported from California to Georgia, these types of crimes involve criminals who will stake out an Apple store or other appliance or high-tech retailer, watching for customers leaving with purchases of computers and other electronics. The criminals then follow the soon-to-be victim, and if they drive to another shopping area and leave the electronics unattended in their vehicle, the criminal, now with opportunity, moves in, breaks into the vehicle and steals the electronic equipment and other valuables. When you have to make multiple stops on a shopping trip, be alert to who is around when you put your purchases into your vehicle. Pay attention to people walking aimlessly through parking lots looking into vehicle windows.

REMEMBER!

DESIRE + ABILITY + OPPORTUNITY = CRIME