

Palmdale Sheriff's Station's Holiday Crime Prevention

Tips



Tips to Prevent Theft from your Vehicle

Holiday Shopping is upon us. Keep your purchases safe.

As we begin our Holiday shopping and may have gifts and other large purchases in our vehicles, we need to think about theft prevention. Thefts from vehicles are reported to the Palmdale Sheriff's Station every day and it remains one of the most frequently occurring crimes in the United States.

Vehicles are easy targets and often contain property attractive to thieves. Even the most amateur thief can stroll through residential neighborhoods and parking lots and find plenty of opportunity.

Help the Palmdale Sheriff's Station reduce this crime in our community by taking these simple steps:

Never leave your car unlocked, or the windows open. Leaving your car unlocked is an open invitation for a thief to help himself. Even leaving your window open a small amount can be enough for a thief to unlock and open your car. Thefts can occur even in the few moments you might be inside a building and your car is not in your view.

Never use a Hide-a-Key box on your car. Thieves will look for these.

Never leave home or office keys in your car. The keys, along with any identifying paperwork left in the car could lead a thief to your home or business.

Never leave valuables in clear view. Do not leave purses, cellular phones, backpacks, laptop computers, gym bags, shopping bags, packages, etc. visible from the outside of your vehicle. A thief may not know what is in a bag, but will be willing to break a window or door lock to find out. If you must keep property in your vehicle, place it in the trunk so it is not visible to the opportunist. Place it there prior to arriving at your destination so you are not seen putting it away when you arrive.

Avoid leaving your car in an under-used or unattended lot. A frequently used lot means more witnesses, so a theft is less likely to occur. If you are parking at night, or will be returning to your car after dark, park in a well-lit area. Stay away from areas that are concealed, obscured or remote.

When at your home, park inside of a garage if possible. Lock your vehicle and close/lock your garage door. If parking in a garage is not an option, park in your driveway or on the street in front of your home. Leave outdoor lights on or use motion sensing lights.

No matter how safe the neighborhood is or how nice the shopping center appears, thefts can always occur. By following these tips we can reduce the thefts in our community and keep the Holidays a time of cheer.



Home Burglary Prevention Tips

It's Holiday time again, a time for joyous celebration with family and friends. But we must also remember that crimes do still occur. In fact, thefts tend to rise during this season.

With all of the chaos of decorating, shopping, and other holiday preparations we often don't think about theft or theft prevention. For example, eleven months out of the year none of us would tempt a thief by placing a pile of our finest possessions on the living room floor within view of the window. However, during the holidays many of us place a Christmas tree within view of our most prominent window and then put gifts under it. We see the gifts as decorations and part of a holiday tradition. A thief sees opportunity.

Before advertising that pile of gifts in your front window or those expensive decorations in your front yard, look at them from a thief's point of view. How quickly and easily could your things be stolen?

Below are some tips from the City of Palmdale – Public Safety Office that you can use year-round to help prevent your home from being burglarized.

1. Never leave doors or windows unlocked when leaving home. Including second floor windows.
2. Secure all obvious points of entry to your home. Pretend you are the burglar and plan how you would break into your own house. Install secondary locking devices (such as anti-lift devices, through-the-door pins, or track screws).
3. Create the illusion that you are home using timers on lights, radios, and televisions.
4. Use a timer or photocell to automatically turn on lights at dusk. Leave porch lights on throughout the night, even when you are home.
5. Keep shrubbery near doors and windows trimmed. Don't provide the burglars with a hiding place or climbing platform.
6. Avoid displaying valuable items such as TVs and computers near windows with open drapes or shades.
7. Use highly visible alarms signs, "Beware of Dog" signs, or Neighborhood Watch decals.
8. Don't leave your garage door transmitter in your vehicle, or at least keep it out of view (the visor is not a good place). Also keep the door locked leading from the garage into the house. If the burglar gets into your car you don't want to give him/her easy access to your garage and then your house.
9. Keep extra keys out of sight and in a safe place. Never hide a key outside, most hiding places are obvious to burglars.
10. Organize a Neighborhood Watch group to protect your neighborhood. Contact the City of Palmdale's Public Safety Office at (661)267-5170 or at publicsafety@cityofpalmdale.org

In addition to these tips, we all need to consider the circumstances that are unique to the holiday season.

*Avoid placing gifts or valuable interior decorations within view from a window

*Secure outdoor decorations

*Secure exterior decorative lights or hang them out of reach

*Don't post your Holiday trip on social media until you return. You never know who might see the post and discover you're out of town.

If you are travelling during the holidays, you can contact the Palmdale Sheriff's Station and request a "Vacation Patrol Check" of your home. Let us know what dates you will be gone, a contact number, and if anyone has your permission to be at the house (to water the plants, feed the animals, etc.). Once logged, your home will be periodically checked by our Volunteers on Patrol. The volunteers immediately report any suspicious activity to deputies for further investigation.

DON'T LET A THIEF RUIN YOUR HOLIDAY !!



Vehicle Theft Prevention Tips

As the weather begins to change, vehicle thefts tend to rise. Many of these thefts are attributed to vehicles left unattended and running in front of homes to warm up the interiors. All of us would like to have a comfortable vehicle interior before the day's drive begins; but is the risk worth it? It takes only seconds for someone to drive away in your car after you have turned it on and left the doors unlocked for them.

Please help combat vehicle theft and do not leave your unattended vehicle running for ANY period of time.

Preventing the "warm up" thefts alone will have an impact on the number of vehicles stolen in our community. But why stop there? Why not make it as difficult as possible for a thief to steal your vehicle?

To prevent vehicle thefts the National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB) recommends "Layered Protection." The more layers of protection on your vehicle, the more difficult it is to steal.

The number of layers your vehicle needs varies based on your vehicle and your budget. Layer #1 is the minimum standard we should all adhere to.

Layer #1 – Common Sense

The common sense approach to protection is the simplest and most cost-effective way to thwart would-be thieves. Secure your vehicle even if parking for brief periods.

- Lock your car!
- Take your keys with you.

- Never hide a spare key on the vehicle.
- Roll up windows completely.
- Park in well-lighted areas.
- Park as close as possible to an open business.
- Always park with the wheels turned toward the curb.
- If you have a garage, use it.
- Lock your garage door.

- NEVER leave your car running while it is unattended.

Layer #2 – Warning Device

The second layer or protection is a visible or audible device which alerts thieves that your vehicle is protected.

Popular second layer devices include:

- *Audible alarms
- *Steering column collars
- *Steering wheel/Brake pedal lock
- *Brake locks
- *Wheel locks
- *Tire locks/Tire deflators
- *Theft deterrent decals
- *Identification markers in or on the vehicle
- *Window etching
- *Micro Dot marking

Layer #3 – Immobilizing Device

The third layer of protection is a device which prevents thieves from bypassing your ignition and “hot-wiring” the vehicle.

Some electronic devices have computer chips in ignition keys. Other devices inhibit the flow of electricity or fuel to the engine until a hidden switch or button is activated.

Popular third layer devices include:

- *Smart keys
- *Fuse cut-offs
- *Kill switches
- *Starter, ignition and fuel disablers
- *Wireless, ignition authentication

Layer #4 – Tracking Device

The final layer of protection is not a theft prevention layer, but will assist in recovery if the thief somehow finds a way through the first three layers of protection.

A tracking device emits a signal to police or a monitoring station when the vehicle is stolen. Tracking devices are very effective in helping authorities recover stolen vehicles. Some systems employ technologies to allow remote monitoring and control of some vehicle features (door locks, hazard light activation, engine disable, etc).

Popular examples of tracking devices are "LO/JACK" and "On-Star."

IF YOUR CAR IS STOLEN...

- Call the Sheriff's Station as soon as possible. However, before the vehicle can be entered into the nation-wide Stolen Vehicle System, you must have your vehicle's license number or the vehicle identification number (also called the VIN number). Easy ways to always have the number available is to write it on a small piece of paper and keep it in your wallet or keep a photo of the license plate on your cell phone. The VIN number is also typically printed on your auto insurance card.

The 2012 Top 10 most stolen cars in California (NICB.org):

- 1 Honda Accord 1994
- 2 Honda Civic 1998
- 3 Toyota Camry 1991
- 4 Acura Integra 1994
- 5 Chevy Pick-Up 2004
- 6 Ford Pick-Up 2006
- 7 Nissan Sentra 1994
- 8 Toyota Corolla 2010
- 9 Nissan Altima 1997
- 10 Toyota Pickup 4x2 1988

For more information on vehicle theft prevention, visit:

NHTSA National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

<http://www.nhtsa.gov/theft>

NICB National Insurance Crime Bureau

<https://www.nicb.org/home>



Online Holiday Shopping Safety Tips

Let the shopping begin!! Due to the convenience thousands of individuals will shop online. Shopping online is great especially if you are trying to avoid long lines and crowds. However, there are people online waiting to take advantage of you. Below are online shopping safety tips which can help you avoid being a victim of identity theft or internet scams.

- Shop only at well-established online stores. You can learn a lot about the store by reading the comments and feedback from other customers.
- When paying, make sure the website address begins with https. The “s” at the end means it is secure and the website encrypts your information.
- Look for the padlock icon in the browser bar. If the padlock icon appears on the webpage, but not in the browser bar, it might be a graphic a cybercriminal embedded to trick you into thinking the website is secure.
- Use a credit card instead of a debit card. Most credit cards offer better protection against unauthorized purchases.
- DO NOT exchange your personal information in exchange for prizes or special offers. It may be a trick to get you to give away sensitive information.
- Ignore pop-up messages while on shopping sites. Set up your browser to block pop-up messages.
- Be careful when using public Wi-Fi networks. The safest public networks are those where you have to type in a password.
- Before purchasing an item you are unsure about, know the company’s’ return policy.
- Before you finalize your purchase calculate the total price of your purchase. Sometimes there are unexpected taxes, handling and shipping fees, you may not be aware of.
- Avoid shopping in stores outside the United States. If you have an issue with the purchased item it can be difficult to return or exchange or even resolve other disputes.
- Monitor your monthly statements to make sure there are no unauthorized purchases. If you find unauthorized charges, contact your bank or the credit card company immediately.

If you would like more information on online holiday shopping safety please visit www.safetyweb.com.



Holiday Shopping Safety Tips

The holidays are approaching fast! Most people have or will be starting their holiday shopping anytime now. The holiday season is a time when busy people can become careless and vulnerable to theft and other holiday crime. Below are shopping safety tips which can help you avoid being a victim of theft:

- Always stay alert to your surroundings!! Do not walk thru a parking lot with your head down or on a cell phone.
- Avoid shopping at night whenever possible. If you must go out at night, bring a friend or a family member. If no one is available to go shopping with you, let a family member know where you are going and what time to expect you home.
- Dress casually and comfortable; avoid wearing expensive jewelry.
- Avoid carrying a large amount of cash. Keep cash in your front pocket.
- If possible, do not carry a purse or wallet. Carry only your identification card along with necessary cash, checks or credit card you expect to use.
- If possible pay for purchases with a credit card.
- Immediately notify the credit card company if your credit card was lost or stolen.
- Have your keys ready when you leave the store.
- Park in a well-lit area.
- Avoid overloading yourself with packages. It is important to have clear visibility and freedom of motion if danger presents itself.
- Be cautious of strangers approaching you for any reason. Many thieves will use different methods to distract you with the intention of taking your money or merchandise.
- Do not leave packages in plain view of your vehicle. Lock all your merchandise in the trunk of your vehicle.

If you would like more information on holiday shopping safety please visit www.crime.about.com.

For these tips and more, check out nixle.com/lasd. Sign-up to receive information directly to your phone and/or email.

Also visit our Facebook Page www.facebook.com/PalmdaleSheriffsStation