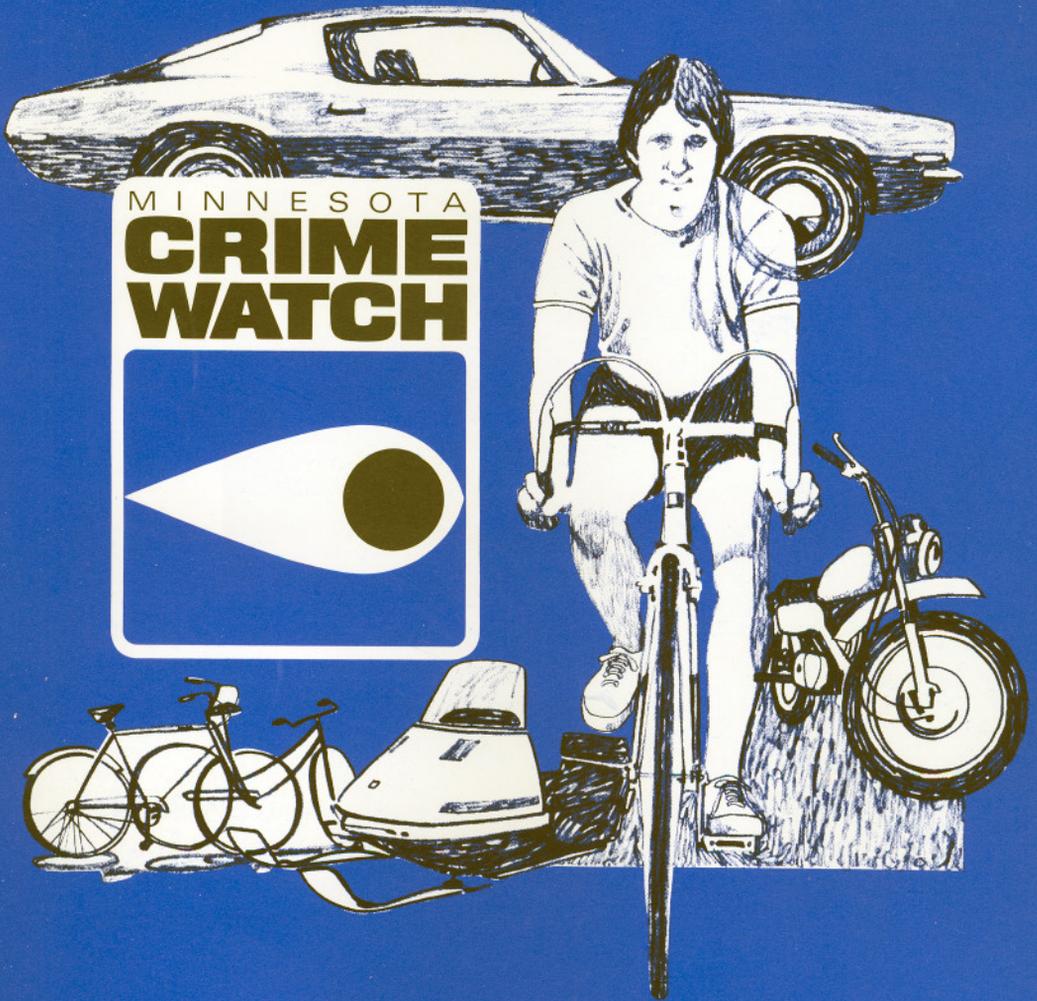


Crime on Wheels

How to protect your car, bicycle, motorcycle
and other vehicles from theft.



Minnesota Department of Public Safety

CRIME ON WHEELS

A car is stolen every 19 seconds, everyday of the year. Bicycle, snowmobile, camper, and other vehicle thefts are on the increase.

Most vehicles are stolen because it was easy to do so. Many cars stolen were left unlocked, and 13% had the keys left inside. Leaving the keys in the ignition is an invitation to thieves. It's also against the law.

CAR THEFT

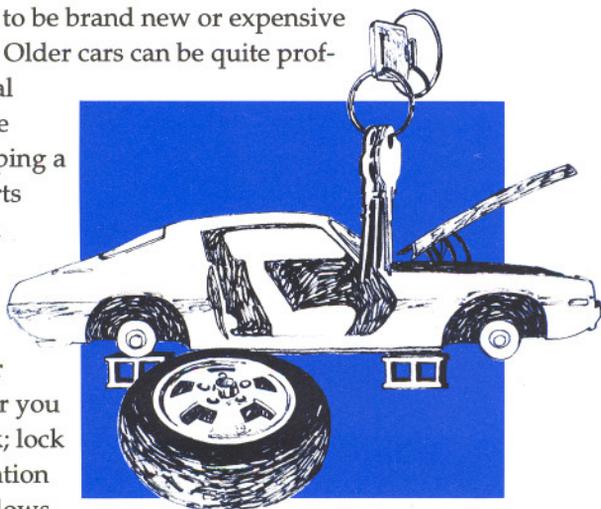
Tips on Preventing Auto Theft and Theft from Auto

Your car doesn't have to be brand new or expensive to interest car thieves. Older cars can be quite profitable, too. Professional thieves can often make more money by stripping a car and selling the parts than trying to sell it in one piece.

Don't make it easy for a thief to take your car. Lock up whenever you leave it; lock the trunk; lock the tailgate of your station wagon. Close all windows

and lock the vent wings. Professional thieves have an unbelievable array of tools to help them unlock cars through a minimum of open window space. Lock up . . . and pocket the keys. Don't hide extra keys under the hood or on the frame. A determined thief will find them.

Don't invite a break-in by leaving packages or valuables in sight. Briefcases, sunglasses, clothing, gym bags, and small change are all tempting to a thief. Take valuables with you, or lock them in your trunk—but not at the spot where you intend to leave your car. A would-be thief may be watching you.



Law enforcement agencies can often recover stolen cars, by computer, if they have the vehicle identification number (VIN). Look for your number on the serial number plate (usually mounted on top of the dashboard on the driver's side just under the windshield), and write it down. Also, join Operation Identification, and engrave your number in some hidden place, so police can identify



your car even if the VIN has been removed. An identifiable number may not stop a theft, but it can help catch and prosecute the thief, and return the stolen property to its rightful owner. You can also simply drop a business card or piece of paper with your name and address on it into the window channel of your car door.

Thousands of stolen cars are disposed of by thieves every year. Often they are bought by careless purchasers. If you're in the market for a used car, you should be on your guard for falsified ownership papers. Ask plenty of questions, like: Where did the owner buy the car; where is the car being serviced? Check the vehicle for signs of tampering or forced entry. And examine the title or other documents for forgery or alteration.

If you are a victim of theft, report the crime immediately to the police.

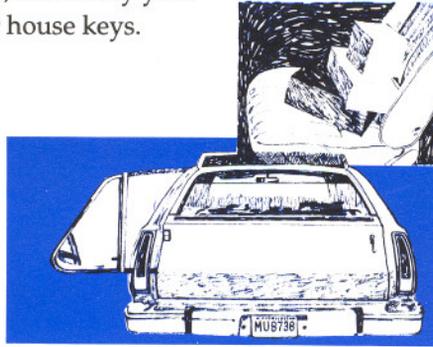
CARJACKING

Carjacking is the term for the crime of taking a car from a person either by force or threat of force. Statistically, your chances of being a carjacking victim are very slim. However, you can reduce the risk even more by being aware of your surroundings, alert to potential dangers, and keeping your doors locked. If a carjacker threatens you with a weapon, don't argue, don't fight back, give up your car. Your life is worth more than a car.

Where possible, park your car in a lot where you don't have to leave your key. If you must leave a key, leave only your ignition key, never your trunk or house keys.

And don't make the mistake of marking your key chain with your name or license number. Your lost keys could lead a thief to your car.

Don't leave your auto registration, credit cards, or other important papers in your glove compartment. A thief could use these as identification when trying to resell your car.



"Anti-theft" devices, such as locking steering columns, steering bar locks, and alarm systems do deter thieves. A siren alarm system may not foil a professional car thief, but it will probably scare off a joy rider.

Burglar alarm systems are often backed up by a hidden cutoff or ignition kill switch. These are simple switches installed in the ignition line that must be closed before you start the car.



There are also locks made for various marketable parts of cars. Battery locks, wheel locks, and special tape deck lock mounts can save these items, plus any damage that may occur in the process of stealing them.

Use slide or portable mounts or add-on radios, citizens band radios (CBs), tape decks, compact disc players, and telephones. When you leave your car, put them in the trunk or (preferably) take them with you.

Some car owners install a locking gas tank cap, not only to save gas, but to limit a thief to the amount of driving possible on one tank.

BICYCLE THEFT

To protect your bicycle, use a case hardened chain and a sturdy padlock. The chain should be at least 3/8" thick and covered with plastic or an inner tube to prevent scratching the bike's finish. A cable is lighter and therefore more convenient, but it can be cut.

Always chain both the rear wheel and the frame to a stationary object in a conspicuous place. If you simply chain one wheel to the other, it can be tossed in a truck and untangled later.

Never leave a bicycle unchained and unattended, even for a short time. Your bike should be stored indoors or in a locked garage whenever you're not using it.



And here's a point to tell your children: If they loan a bike to a stranger who asks to "try it out," they may never see it again.

Be sure to register the serial number, make, model, and description of your bicycle with any deputy registrar, licensing bureau, or contact your local police for more information. If your bike is stolen, chances for recovery are considerably better if it has been licensed.

It also helps to join Operation Identification. Your police or sheriff will loan you an engraving tool for marking your bike and other valuables with a permanent number. This ID number makes it hard for a thief to sell your bike and easier for the police to trace.

GARAGES

If you have a garage, use it. It only takes a few minutes to lock your car, chain your bike or motorcycle, or move your snowmobile inside a locked garage. These actions may cause a thief to try somewhere else.

Secure your garage as you would secure your home. Install dead-bolt locks with heavy-duty strike plates which use three-inch wood screws.

A case-hardened padlock that is notched and locks at both ends of the shackle should secure your overhead door.

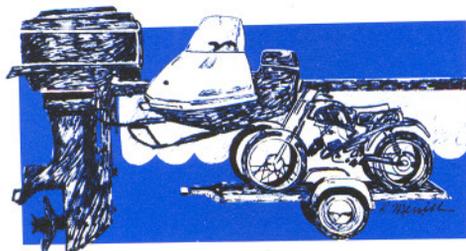
Electronic garage door openers with automatic locking devices offer good security, but always keep the transmitter box that activates these openers in a safe place. It can be stolen and used by a burglar to open your garage door. Mark your transmitter box with your Operation I.D. number.

Always unplug the opener when on vacation. This is another safeguard against the garage door being opened by an intruder.

Make it difficult for anyone to see what valuables you have in your garage. Cover and secure the windows that lead into your garage. While working in your yard, do not leave your garage door open. Don't make it easy for a potential burglar to take inventory of valuables in your garage.

THEFT OF SNOWMOBILES, MOTORCYCLES, AND OTHER RECREATIONAL VEHICLES

Many of the cautions that apply to cars and bicycles also apply to recreational vehicles like snowmobiles, motorcycles, trail bikes, boats, and so forth. The most important thing to remember is: always lock up, and take the keys with you.



Any vehicle carried on a trailer (whether it's a motorbike or boat) should be carefully secured, preferably with a strong chain and padlock.

When the trailer is away from your car, make sure to secure it with a heavy chain and lock, to a stationary object. When storing your boat on its trailer, remove the wheels and leave it on blocks.

Try to dock your boat in an area that's patrolled, or at least well-lighted, with people nearby. Secure it with a rust-proof chain and lock. Some boat owners use locking boat lifts which raise the boat out of the water and make theft difficult. Other devices are intrusion detection alarms, hidden ignition switches, and engine locks...all similar to those used on automobiles.

Don't leave your boat or camper without locking up all easy-to-carry items like motors, water skis, and camping gear. Don't make it easy for a thief to steal from you. Here again, your Operation ID number could help recover a stolen vehicle or other valuables.

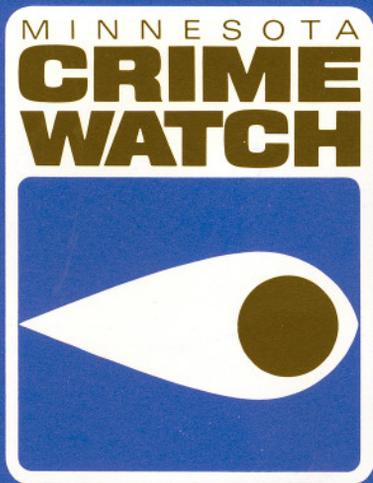
Whenever you leave your motorcycle or snowmobile, chain the entire machine to some immovable object, such as a lamppost or sewer grating. Even when you garage it, you still need a heavy-duty chain and padlock that resists conventional steel hacksaw blades. You can also buy an alarm that's mounted behind the license plate, sounding off if the vehicle is moved.

BLOCK CLUBS/NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAMS

Block clubs and neighborhood watch programs are another way you and your neighbors can reduce crime. Working with their local law enforcement agency, participants learn to watch out for suspicious behavior and unusual activities in their neighborhoods and how to report these activities to the police. To begin a block club or neighborhood watch program, contact a crime prevention specialist/officer with the law enforcement agency serving your community.



For more information on any of these topics contact your local Law Enforcement Agency.



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