



Auto

TAKE STEPS TO PREVENT CARJACKING

According to the latest Department of Justice figures, carjacking accounts for only 3% of all auto theft nationwide. But what it lacks in frequency, it makes up in sheer terror for its victims.

Some quick facts:

- Carjacking most often occurs in urban areas, typically when the owner is entering or exiting a parked vehicle.
- The majority of carjacking attempts are made within five miles of the victim's home.
- Most carjackings take only 20 to 30 seconds.

AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION

The best way to foil a would-be carjacker is to make yourself an undesirable target. Carry yourself with confidence, and be alert at all times. Criminals thrive on the element of surprise and they specifically look for victims who appear either apathetic or unfamiliar with their surroundings.

GETTING OUT OF THE CAR

- Park in a well-lighted area. Avoid parking next to any large utility-type vans or trucks, areas of thick foliage, dark alleys, etc.
- Be aware of those around you. If you're suspicious for any reason, find a better parking space, or leave the area altogether.
- If possible, park in an area facing the front of the place you're visiting, preferably an area with quite a few people around.
- At home, install lighting to illuminate the whole driveway/garage area when you pull in. Cut back foliage that could conceal a thief or obstruct a neighbor's view of your parking area.
- Never leave your motor running or your children unattended.

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RETURNING TO YOUR CAR

- Carry your keys in your hand while walking to the car. If you have to fumble in your pocket or purse to retrieve them, you're an easier target.
- As you approach the vehicle, look under, around, and inside your car.
- Avoid keeping your back exposed for too long while loading packages.
- If you feel something is wrong, don't hesitate to walk (or run) back to where you came from. Ask a security guard or someone trustworthy to escort you to your car.
- Lock all doors immediately upon entering the car. Start your engine and drive away as soon as you can.

INSIDE THE CAR

- Keep your doors locked at all times. Don't roll your windows down far enough to fit an arm through.
- Keep your car well-maintained to avoid breakdowns.
- Don't pick up hitchhikers or stop to assist a disabled vehicle. Instead, call for help.
- When stopped in traffic or at intersections, always leave ample space between you and the car in front. Make sure you can see its rear tires. That prevents a would-be carjacker from parking close enough behind to trap you. If someone suspicious does approach your car on foot, you'll have room to pull out and drive away.
- If you're being followed, don't drive home! Go to the nearest area with lots of people or drive to the local police station and honk your horn.
- If you're rear-ended, don't exit your vehicle unless you're in a well-populated area. Stay in your car and roll down your window just far enough to speak and exchange insurance cards.