

Vehicle Crime – Ultimate Tips For Staying Safe Near Your Car

Prepare yourself with these quick tips. Arm yourself with the facts of how vehicle crime happens and gain a new sense of security and confidence near your car. Many people are completely unaware of there being ANY danger at all! Let's discover the facts.

I truly believe that the only way to learn to protect yourself from crime is to first educate yourself on the subject. Once you understand exactly what risks you are facing, you will have a much better chance of keeping yourself and your loved ones safe from harm. Most of us probably spend the majority of our time in three places:

- At home
- At work
- In our cars

I have talked a little bit about how to protect yourself from crime by thinking carefully about your [Home Security](#), but you are in danger while in and around your car too. There are two primary times when vehicle crime happens. Criminals are likely to target you when you are:

- Moving towards your car
- Moving away from your car

Avoid Vehicle Crime With Better Awareness

Awareness is of huge importance when it comes to keeping safe from vehicle crime. If you haven't read my page on [awareness](#), you should click through to that page and do so before you read any further!

Most people have very little awareness of their surroundings when they are near their cars (but not yet driving). This makes them an attractive target for vehicle crime. People are often distracted while putting bags of groceries into the boot (trunk). Parents have to deal with screaming children who won't do as they are told. Many may be checking their Facebook status on their cell phone or may actually be speaking on the phone while getting into or out of their cars.

The common idea here is that people's minds are somewhere else at these times. Being distracted while near your car makes you a target for any criminals who may be watching. They know that you are not paying attention and won't notice them sneaking up on you.

Transition Areas Are Vehicle Crime Hotspots

Factors outside of yourself are also important for avoiding becoming a vehicle crime victim. You are likely to be in what's called a "transition area". In other words, you are in an area where people are "transitioning" or moving from one place to another.

In shopping malls, the parking lot is a transition area. Some people are leaving the shop with their bags of purchases, headed home. Others are just arriving, about to start their shopping experience. Very few people spend any length of time IN these transition areas. In fact, the people who do stand around the empty vehicles usually seem out of place. Chances are that their intentions are not pure, keep an eye on them!

After all, unless they are a security guard, they have no valid reason to be there...except perhaps to rob or attack people near their cars!

Transition Areas Are Usually Empty

The fact that there are so few people in these areas at any one time only adds to the danger. If a mugger wants to attack someone and take their money, where is he most likely to do it?

It is extremely unlikely that he will choose to attack you and steal your belongings in the middle of a crowded shopping mall with hundreds of people around. There are too many witnesses (people who could identify him in a court of law).

Not only that, but there may be a number of strong men who will be willing to jump in and try to stop him from robbing you. It's too risky for him to attack you there! The best place for him to commit a vehicle crime is in the parking lot, away from the crowds. This is a place where he is in control. He can:

- Make sure there are no security guards around
- Find a good hiding place (between two parked cars?)
- Choose the best time to attack (when you least expect it)

Nobody Will Hear You Scream

If there is nobody else around when he attacks you, who is going to hear your shouts for help? In a transition area like a parking lot, you will probably be:

- Alone
- Distracted with thoughts of home or shopping
- Carrying too many shopping bags

In other words, you will be...THE PERFECT TARGET FOR VEHICLE CRIME!

You must realize that criminals do not want to fight with you! They don't want to enter into a boxing match. That would be far too difficult and risky for them.

They would much rather quickly overwhelm you before you have a chance to fight back. They usually do this by threatening you with a knife or gun or punching you as soon as they get within arm's reach.

In some cases, they may even shoot or stab you without saying a word! The goal with each of these strategies is to render you helpless as quickly as possible. Either you will be too afraid to offer resistance (after he threatens you with his weapon) or you will be injured and in a state of shock.

If he has decided to attack you, it's because he knows that the odds are in his favor! He will probably only risk it if the situation is just right (i.e. you are alone, distracted, do not look like you will be able or willing to fight back).

Darkness Is A Criminal's Best Friend

Another time that you may be at risk of vehicle crime is at night. The place where you parked your car earlier in the day may look very different when you return after dark.

Some areas, especially those in or around city centers may be very poorly lit. Street lights may be out or positioned too far away to shed enough light on your car. The way the surrounding buildings are built may also create dark shadows where even the moonlight does not reach.

There may also be a different and unfriendly element around at this time. People who live on the streets may have spent the day walking around trying to find food or standing on street corners begging for money. But once the sun goes down, many of them return to their “homes” to sleep.

A large number of [homeless](#) people abuse alcohol and drugs. This makes their behavior unpredictable. Street people can pose a real threat to strangers who stumble into THEIR territory area. There are many factors that make this situation dangerous for you and make you a very attractive target to criminals:

1. You are probably alone
2. It's dark
3. You may be distracted with thoughts of home and relaxation
4. They have the element of SURPRISE

You should keep these factors in mind when you are planning to only come back to your parking place after nightfall. Being a little more careful and a lot more aware of your surroundings could save you from a very dangerous situation!

Arriving Home In Your Car

Many of the same factors that make it dangerous to be around your car while away from home also apply when you pull into your driveway. In fact, you are MORE at risk for vehicle crime when you approach your home since you feel relaxed and safe there.

People usually start to relax as soon as they pull into their driveway. They STOP being [aware](#) of what's going on around them. As I have said, it's exactly when people are distracted or feel completely SAFE that criminals are most likely to attack. A common strategy that criminals in South Africa use is to hide around the side of the homeowner's garage, waiting. As soon the homeowner pulls into the garage and turns the engine off, they launch their attack. Since the homeowner probably:

- Feels completely safe and relaxed (it's home after all)
- Is distracted (“Hmmm, I wonder what's for dinner?”)
- Is tired from a day at work

...they are usually very easy to catch off guard. The criminals who commit vehicle crimes such as hijacking usually work in groups of 3 or more and are always well armed (usually with handguns).

Each member of the gang will have a job to do. For example, one man may be ready to point his gun at the driver's face as soon as he opens the car door. Another one will be behind the vehicle and a third may position himself on the passenger side.

With such overwhelming SURPRISE, strength of numbers and firepower, the homeowner usually has no chance! With lots of shouting and threatening, they first take any valuables that the driver may have on him (wallet, watch and cell phone) and then quickly get into the victim's car to make their escape. Even if the home has electric gates, the gate remote is usually kept in the car, making things easy for them.

No Witnesses Around To Identify Them

Since these gangs attack homeowners in their driveways or in their garages, criminals don't have to be concerned with other people witnessing their crime. The time of day (usually early in the morning or in the early evening) makes it even less likely that there will be anyone around to see the crime happen.

If the criminals are worried about being identified, they usually wear a “balaclava” (Ski mask). Although, most of the time they are not too concerned about this because they believe the victims will be too shocked and traumatized to remember their faces. Unfortunately, they are often right.

While it is possible for a neighbor to hear or see something, they may simply be shot by the gang if they try to intervene.

Vehicle Crime Turns Into Home Invasion Robbery

An even scarier version of this vehicle crime may happen if the criminals are not satisfied with simply taking the car and whatever valuables you may have on you. They could decide to force you to let them into your home.

Since you have the remote control for the burglar alarm (or at least know the security code), they don't have to risk trying to break in. They simply force you, at gunpoint, to disable the alarm system for them. Many South Africans have been attacked in this way. They are then tied up and left in a bathroom or bedroom while the criminals go through the house collecting anything of value.

Once they are inside the home (and the alarm has been switched off), there is very little risk of them being interrupted. They sometimes take their time loading up both the homeowner's vehicle AND their own with all the valuables they can find. Televisions, computers and stereo systems are all packed into the vehicles.

Difficult To Think About

Topics such as this can be difficult or unpleasant to think about. Nobody wants to imagine that horrible things might happen to them. But...only once you have a clear, "reality-based" picture in your head of what you might face, can you start preparing yourself for it.

I hope you will keep on reading the information on this website to constantly improve that "picture" and reduce your risk of violent criminal attack.

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