



## ALBUQUERQUE POLICE DEPARTMENT CRIME PREVENTION AUTO THEFT PREVENTION



Auto theft is a problem for all Americans, but the citizens of New Mexico face a particular issue that affects our auto theft rate. Due to the fact that we are adjacent to an International Border, we are always ranked high on the list for theft rates. Typically, vehicles are stolen for one of four reasons. They are used to joy ride, sell for parts, commit a crime or driven across the border for resale. Also, more than 2/3 of all auto thefts take place at night between the hours of 1:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m. and over half occur in residential areas including apartment complexes. You can take a variety of steps to insure that you are not a victim of auto theft. Observe the following tips to reduce the chances of your vehicle from being stolen.

- Always roll up your windows, lock the doors, and take the key even if you will be away for a short time.
- Never leave your car running in front of a convenient store or other public area, including in front of your house. Warming up your car in the morning during the winter can make you more vulnerable.
- Park your vehicle in a garage (if possible) or in an area with adequate lighting and good natural surveillance.
- If you put your vehicle in for repairs or in a commercial lot, only leave the ignition key.
- Keep valuables in the trunk or out of site. Don't give a car thief a reason to break in.
- Purchase stereo equipment and other electronic devices that can be removed.
- Theft Prevention Device: After years of false alarms, people have stopped paying attention to alarms. Any serious anti-theft device must do more than just make noise. If you want an audio alarm, use it in conjunction with other forms of prevention.
  - A kill switch is a simple toggle device that shuts off the engine's ignition system.
  - Steering wheel locks are visible from outside the car and prevent the steering wheel from being turned more than a few degrees.
  - Collars are devices that prevent the steering column from being stripped.
  - Brake locks prevent the brake from being engaged and therefore the transmission cannot be removed from the park position.
  - Wheel locks prevent the vehicle from being moved in any direction.
  - Etching vehicle parts with your VIN number can also be a deterrent. Professional thieves shy away from vehicles that have had the vehicle identification number (VIN) etched into the doors, windows, windshield, engine block, and other parts.

**CARJACKING:** Carjacking has become an easy way to steal vehicles, especially newer model large luxury cars and sport utility vehicles that have alarms and state-of-the-art anti-theft devices. As with any crime, criminals are looking for the path of least resistance. Avoid being a victim of this type of crime by observing the following tips.

- Always drive with windows rolled up and doors locked
- Be aware of you surroundings when stopped at a traffic signal, parking lot, gas station, etc
- When stopped at a signal, leave space in front of you to allow for evasive action and be prepared to carefully drive away
- Take note of people approaching your vehicle for any reason
- Prior to entering your car – if someone is loitering near the area, keep walking and seek help
- Be alert at a drive-up ATM
- If all else fails – don't resist

The goal in preventing auto theft is to establish multiple layers of protection for your vehicle. Thieves are looking for the path of least resistance. Although no method is foolproof, consider where you park, theft prevention devices, and etching. However, spending money on anti-theft devices does not help if drivers don't follow the basic precaution of locking their cars, taking the key, and activating the anti-theft device.