

Gainesville Police Department **Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention**

The Gainesville Police Departments Community Relations Unit is a proactive component of the department and would like to share with the community some important safety tips about Motor Vehicle Theft prevention. Motor vehicle theft is a serious problem in many parts of the world. In the United States, the annual loss from car theft is over \$4 billion. The Automotive Information Council reports that over one million motor vehicles are stolen in the U.S. each year. That's one motor vehicle theft every 31 seconds. Please use these safety tips in your daily routine to protect you and your property:

- 1) Lock it and pocket the keys. Nearly 20% of all vehicles stolen had the keys in them. Remember to lock the trunk, the hatchback or the tailgate of a station wagon or sport utility vehicle (SUV)
- 2) If your motor vehicle is an older model, replace standard door lock buttons with tapered ones. These replacements are inexpensive and much more difficult to pry up.
- 3) Don't leave motor vehicle registration, insurance policies, credit cards or other important papers in a vehicle's glove compartment.
- 4) If you use a self-service gasoline stations or convenience stores, don't leave the key in the vehicle when you go inside to pay your bill.
- 5) Don't place a mini-replica of a license plate or personal identification on a vehicle's key ring.
- 6) Never hide a second set of keys in the vehicle. Extra keys can easily be found if the thief takes time to look. Store a spare key in your wallet.
- 7) If possible, avoid parking next to vans, pick-ups, and other large vehicles. These large vehicles can "hide" your vehicle and make it more difficult for others to observe.
- 8) When parking along a curb, angle the front wheels sharply to the left or right, making it difficult for the thief to tow it away. Wheels should also be turned to the side in driveways and parking lots.
- 9) If your vehicle is rear-wheel drive, back into your driveway. Rear wheels lock on four-wheel drive vehicles, making them difficult to tow. Front-wheel drive vehicles should be parked front end first.
- 10) Periodically check your license plates to make sure they haven't been stolen, switched or altered.
- 11) Don't invite a vehicle break-in by leaving packages or valuables (radar detectors, cellular phones, compact disc players, etc.) in sight. Take valuables with you, put them under the seat or lock them in the trunk.
- 12) Whenever possible, park in well lighted and busy areas.
- 13) Whenever possible, park in an attended lot. Motor vehicle thieves do not like witnesses and prefer unattended parking lots.
- 14) When you park in an attended lot, leave only the ignition/door key. If your trunk and glovebox use the same key as the door, have one of them changed. Leaving

the ignition key with the attendant, retain all others and be sure the key number does not appear on the key that is left.

- 15)** On cold mornings, never leave your motor vehicle running while it is unattended, in order to warm up.
- 16)** For each vehicle you own or lease, record the following information and keep it in a safe location (not in the vehicle):
 - Make and Model
 - Model Year
 - Registration Number (Plate)
 - Vehicle Identification Number (VIN)
 - Color
 - Name of Insurance Company and Agent
 - Engine Size
 - Any Peculiarities of Vehicle (dents, pin stripes, etc.)
 - Key Number
- 17)** Avoid transferring items to the trunk of a vehicle where it is to be parked. A thief may be watching. Checkbooks, credit cards or other credentials which a thief could misuse should not be left in a motor vehicle.
- 18)** Park as close as possible to an open business.
- 19)** If you have a garage, use it. Lock your garage door. Also lock your vehicle doors, even when it's in the garage.
- 20)** When going out of town and leaving your motor vehicle, if possible, remove the electronic ignition fuse, rotor distributor or the coil wire.
- 21)** If you see a disabled motor vehicle, don't stop. Instead, drive to a nearby telephone and inform the police of the vehicle's location.
- 22)** If your vehicle becomes disabled, attach a white handkerchief to the door handle or window, lock the doors and stay inside the vehicle. If someone stops to help, do not open your door or window. Ask the person to please go to a telephone and call for help.
- 23)** Possibly use cane type steering wheel locks. The metal cane hooks around the brake pedal on one end, and around the steering wheel rim or spoke on the other. The device is drawn tight and locked with a key.
- 24)** Don't disconnect the buzzer that warns of keys left in the ignition. It's for your protection.
- 25)** Possibly use a locking gas cap, not only to prevent theft of gasoline, but to limit a thief to the amount of driving he can do on one tank.

Thank You and BE SAFE!