

## ***Crime Prevention Tips***

### ***Preventing Burglary of a Motor Vehicle***

In 2008, 22,398 motor vehicles were burglarized in the City of Dallas. That is down 8% from 24,367 in 2007, but still a very large number of offenses. A crime of opportunity, burglaries of motor vehicles are decreasing in Dallas, but remain a problem for both citizens and law enforcement.

#### **BMV from a Criminal's Viewpoint:**

- **Wide Variety of Merchandise.** A vast array of property is left inside parked vehicles. Laptop computers, cell phones, GPS devices, after-market car stereo systems, video systems (often mounted in headrests), even purses and wallets, just scratches the surface of the variety of "window shopping" goodies criminals feast upon.
- **Easy Shopping.** It takes less than a minute to break a vehicle's window, unlock the door, and remove items left inside. Most of the time, there are no witnesses to these offenses because of the ease and speed.
- **Low Risk.** In Texas, BMV is a misdemeanor offense, meaning less time behind bars. Only on the third conviction does BMV become a felony.
- **Hard to be caught.** Because thieves often pick vehicles parked in secluded spots, dark areas, and avoid crowded areas, there is often no witness to BMV offenses.
- **Easy to Convert Stolen Items to Cash.** This can trip up a burglar IF items stolen are marked (or serial numbers recorded), and these numbers are reported to police. In Dallas, pawn shops are required to record the names of persons pawning merchandise. If a serial number of a stolen piece of property is identified, it is easy to identify the suspect who pawned it. Unfortunately, the vast majority of property stolen is not marked, or the serial numbers are not recorded, and the property is never identified as stolen.

## What You can do to help from becoming a victim:

- **Take, Lock, Hide. The basic crime fighting tool to preventing BMV.**
- **Lock your vehicle.** Yes, it takes seconds to break a window, but doing so makes noise – and criminals hate making noise. Also, officers report that in many instances where a victim left their vehicle unlocked (to prevent windows from being broken); the suspect broke the window anyway, expecting the vehicle to be locked.
- **Hide valuables from sight, or, even better, take items with you.** If a criminal doesn't see anything, they're less likely to break in, and will go to the next vehicle and window shop. Remember to hide valuables BEFORE you park in the place you're leaving your vehicle. If a criminal sees you put a laptop in the trunk, they'll just break into the trunk when you leave. Same advice for putting property under a seat. If a criminal sees you reaching under a seat, they'll assume something is under there, and break in, looking for property.
- **Park in areas that are not secluded.** Well lit parking lots, with good "sight lines", make it more likely your vehicle is visible to the general public. Attended parking lots, monitored by uniformed or easily identifiable legitimate parking attendants, are ideal. Remember, criminals don't like witnesses.
- **After market car stereos; consider models with removable faceplates.** Take the faceplate with you when you leave your vehicle.
- **Record serial numbers of property you may leave inside your vehicle.** If stolen, it makes it more likely the suspect, if he tries to pawn, will be identified.

Remember, there is no 100% fool-proof way to prevent all crime. You can make yourself less likely to be a victim of BMV by following the above tips, and by using common sense. Simply locking your vehicle and removing property from inside is half the battle.

**Remember that YOU are an important partner in the fight against crime.**