

Crime Prevention Tips

Any questions regarding "Crime Prevention" or "Safety" please contact the FSD Police Officers.

This page has information about Crime Prevention tips.

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Automobile Theft Prevention

(These tips are from the pamphlet "50 Ways to Watch Your Car" as distributed by the Texas Automobile Theft Prevention Authority, The North Texas Council of Governments, and The Texas Department of Transportation. For more information call 1-800-CAR-WATCH.)

"No Cost" Precautions

- Take Your Keys. Nearly 20 percent of all vehicles stolen had the keys in them.
- Lock Your Car. Approximately 50 percent of all vehicles stolen were left unlocked.
- Never Hide a Second Set of Keys in Your Car. Extra keys can easily be found if a thief takes time to look.
- Park in Well-lighted Areas. More than half of all vehicle thefts occur at night.
- Park in Attended Lots. Auto thieves do not like witnesses and prefer unattended parking lots.
- If you Park in an Attended Lot, Leave Only the Ignition/Door Key. If your trunk and glove box use the same key as the door, have one of them changed. Don't give the attendant easy access to your glove box and trunk. Upon returning, check the tires, spare and battery to ensure they are the same as those you had when you parked.
- Never Leave Your Car Running, Even if You'll Only Be Gone for a Minute. Vehicles are commonly stolen at convenience stores, gas stations, ATM's etc. Many vehicles are also stolen on cold mornings when the owner leaves the vehicle running to warm up. Leaving your key in an unattended motor vehicle is a crime in Texas.
- Completely Close Car Windows when Parking. Don't make it any easier for the thief to enter your vehicle.

- Don't Leave Valuables in Plain View. Don't make your car a more desirable target and attract thieves by leaving valuables in plain sight.
- Park With Your Wheels Turned Toward the Curb. Make your car tough to tow away. Wheels also should be turned to the side in driveways and parking lots.
- If Your Vehicle is Rear-Wheel Drive, Back Into Your Driveway. Front-wheel drive vehicles should be parked front end first. On four-wheel drive vehicles the rear wheels sometimes lock, making them difficult to tow.
- Always Use Your Emergency Brake When Parking. In addition to ensuring safety, using the emergency brake makes your car harder to tow.
- If You Have a Garage, Use It. If you have a garage, take the time to use it rather than parking outside where your vehicle is more vulnerable.
- When Parking in a Garage, Lock the Garage Door and Your Vehicle. By locking both the garage and vehicle doors, the chances of deterring a thief greatly improve.
- Don't Leave the Registration or Title in Your Car. A car thief will use these to sell your stolen car. File the title at your home or office, and carry registration in your purse or wallet.
- Disable Your Vehicle When Leaving it Unattended for an Extended Period. Remove the electronic ignition fuse, coil wire, rotor distributor, or otherwise disable your vehicle anytime thieves may have extended access to it.
- Replace "T"-shaped Door Locks With Straight Locks. Some vehicle doors have lock assemblies at window level that flare out in a knob or "T" shape. A thief can use various tools to gain access inside the vehicle, grab and pull the lock. Straight locks prevent this.
- Vehicle Identification Number (VIN). Stolen cars/parts are more easily traced when vehicle VIN numbers have been etched on car windows and major parts.
- Engrave Expensive Accessories. Engrave personal I.D. numbers on car stereos, cellular phones, etc., so the thief will have difficulty disposing of them
- Drop Business Cards, Address Labels, or Other I.D. Inside Vehicle Doors. Car thieves usually alter vehicle identification numbers. By marking your vehicle as much as possible, you assist police in identifying your car.

Investing In Vehicle Protection

- Ignition Kill Switch. Splice an inexpensive toggle switch into your ignition wire or to your starter. The trick is hiding your switch well. Key pads, pressure pads, and more expensive "Immobilizers" and "Passkeys" also can be used.
- Fuel Kill Switch. The valve that halts the fuel supply is closed.

- Visible Steering Wheel Lock. Prevents the steering wheel from being turned.
- Floorboard Locks. Devices that disable the gas or brake pedal.
- Gearshift Locks. Disables shifting of the transmission.
- Tire/Wheel Locks. Prevents the vehicle from moving.
- Hood Locks. Prevents the thief from gaining access to your security systems and battery.
- Armored Collar Around the Steering. Protects the column and ignition.

Electronic Security Systems

- Alarms. Loud warnings sound when doors/hood/trunk are opened. Optional sensors include glass breakage, motion and towing. Panic buttons, back-up batteries, flashing parking lights or headlights, and automatic engine disable features also are recommended.
- Vehicle Tracking. Transmitter hidden in car enables police to track the car. (Not available in all areas.)

Beware of "HOT" Used Car Deals

Not all stolen cars are stripped for parts. Many are resold to unknowing and unsuspecting buyers. If you knowingly buy a stolen car, you can be arrested. If you buy a stolen car unknowingly, you could lose the car and your money. Avoid becoming the car thief's **second** victim by following these tips.

- Be suspicious of any deal that seems "too good to be true".
- When buying from a private individual, make sure the title and registration match the name and address of the person selling the car.
- Be cautious of a seller with no fixed address, place of employment, or phone number.
- Ask the seller for references about past financing and insurance on the vehicle. Verify the information with the bank, finance company, or agent.
- Ensure the *vehicle information number* (VIN) plate on the automobile's dash is present, secure, and has no loose rivets.
- Check to ensure the VIN plate has not been repainted and the numbers stamped in the plate appear to be the original factory numbers.
- Ensure the VIN plate rivets are original. All 1970 and newer autos produced in North America have stainless steel "rosette" rivets with six petals and a hole in the middle. They are difficult to scratch with a knife.

- Thieves may remove the VIN plate and replace it with one from a similar wrecked vehicle. If in doubt about plate authenticity, check with a new car dealer who handles the same model, or contact a law enforcement agency.
- The VIN on the dash must match the VIN on the registration, title, and federal safety inspection sticker on the driver's door.
- If the VIN plate is scratched, bent or missing rivets, tampering may have occurred.
- Make sure the federal safety inspection sticker, located on the driver's door or door jamb, is securely in place and none of the numbers appear to be tampered with.
- Beware of a loose dashboard.
- An excessively loose ignition switch may indicate tampering. Check the switch for chisel or pull marks.
- Be wary of a fresh paint job on a newer vehicle. This may indicate an attempt to change the car's identity.
- Check the inspection and license plate stickers to be sure they are current and issued by the same state.
- If the seller provides you with only re-made keys, not original manufacturer's keys, for a newer model, be suspicious.
- Titles and registrations are frequently counterfeited. Therefore, demand the title before paying, and make sure it matches the registration. By completing all paperwork at the time of sale, you avoid giving the thief extra time to obtain fraudulent documents.
- Question the seller if the registration was recently issued on an older vehicle.
- Compare the engine identification numbers with all other numbers to ensure a match.
- Be cautious of new license plates on an old car, or new plate bolts on an older plate.

Home Security

(These tips are from the pamphlet "Home Security, Invest In It Now," that is distributed by the National Crime Prevention Council, 1700 K Street, NW, Second Floor, Washington, DC 20006-3817, see <http://www.weprevent.org/>, the Bureau of Justice Assistance Office of Justice Programs U.S. Department of Justice, and ADT Security Services.)

Check The Locks

- Make sure every external door has a sturdy, well-installed dead bolt lock. Key-in-the-knob locks alone are not enough.
- Sliding glass doors can offer easy access if they are not properly secured. You can secure them by installing commercially available locks or putting a broomstick or dowel in the track to jam the door. To prevent the door being lifted off the track, drill a hole through the sliding door frame and the fixed frame. Then insert a pin in the hole.
- Lock double-hung windows with key locks or "pin" windows by drilling a small hole into a 45 degree angle between the inner and outer frames, then insert a nail that can be removed. Secure basement windows with grilles or grates.
- Instead of hiding keys around the outside of your home, give an extra key to a neighbor you trust.
- When you move into a new house or apartment, re-key the locks.

Check The Doors

- All outside doors should be metal or solid wood.
- If your doors don't fit tightly in their frames, install weather stripping around them.
- Install a peephole or wide-angle viewer in all entry doors so you can see who is outside without opening the door. Door chains break easily and don't keep out intruders.

Check The Outside

- Thieves hate bright lights. Install outside lights and keep them on at night.
- Keep your yard clean. Prune back shrubbery so it doesn't hide doors or windows. Cut back tree limbs that a thief could use to climb to an upper-level window.
- Clearly display your house number so police and other emergency vehicles can find your home quickly.
- If you travel, create the illusion that you're at home by getting some timers that will turn lights on and off in different areas of your house throughout the evening. Lights burning 24 hours a day signal an empty house.
- Leave shades, blinds, and curtains in normal positions. And don't let your mail pile up! Call the post office to stop delivery or have a neighbor pick it up.

- Make a list of your valuables - VCRs, stereos, computers, jewelry. Take photos of the items, list their serial numbers and descriptions. Check with law enforcement about engraving your valuables through Operation Identification.
- Ask local law enforcement for a free home security survey.

Consider An Alarm

- Check with several companies before you buy so you can decide what level of security fits your needs. Do business with an established company and check references before signing a contract.
- Learn how to use your system properly! Don't "cry wolf" by setting off false alarms. People will stop paying attention and you'll possibly be fined.
- Some less expensive options... a sound detecting socket that plugs into a light fixture and makes the light flash when it detects certain noises, motion sensing outdoor lights that turn on whenever someone approaches, or lights with photo cells that turn on when it's dark and off when it's light.

Burglars do more than steal

- If something looks questionable - a slit screen, a broken window, or an open door - don't go in. Call the police from a neighbor's house or a public phone.
- At night, if you hear someone breaking in, leave safely if you can, then call police. If you can't leave, lock yourself in a room with a phone and call police. If an intruder is in your room, pretend you are asleep.
- Guns are responsible for many accidental deaths in the home every year. Think carefully before buying a gun. If you do own one, learn how to store it and use it safely.

There's more you can do

- Join a neighborhood watch group. If one doesn't exist, you can start one with help from local law enforcement.
 - Never leave a message on your answering machine that indicates you may be away from home. Rather than saying "I'm not at home right now," say "I'm not available right now."
 - Work with neighbors and local government to organize community clean-ups. The cleaner your neighborhood, the less attractive it is to crime.
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Protecting Your Privacy

(These tips are from the pamphlet "Protecting Your Privacy, Keeping an Eye on Your Private Information," that is distributed by the National Crime Prevention Council, 1700 K Street, NW, Second Floor, Washington, DC 20006-3817, see <http://www.weprevent.org/>, the Bureau of Justice Assistance Office of Justice Programs U.S. Department of Justice, and ADT Security Services.)

A Word on Passwords

Whether you are on the Internet or an online banking program, you are often required to use a password. The worst passwords to use are the ones that come to mind first - name, spouse's name, maiden name, pets, children's names, even street addresses, etc. The best passwords mix numbers with upper and lowercase letters. A password that is not found in a dictionary is even better. There are programs that will try every word in the dictionary in an effort to crack your security.

The weakest link in a security system is the human element. The fewer people who have access to your codes and passwords the better. Avoid breaks in your security by:

- Changing your password(s) regularly.
- Memorizing your password.
- Setting up a special account or setting aside a different computer at work for temporary help and unauthorized users.
- If you have the option of letting your computer or a Web site remember your password for you, don't use it.
- Don't send confidential, financial, or personal information on your email system.

Shopping in Cyberspace

Ordering merchandise from the Internet is the trend of the future. You can prevent problems before they occur by:

- Doing business with companies you know and trust.
- Understanding the offer.
- Using a secure browser that will encrypt or scramble purchase information.
- Never give a bank account or credit card number or other personal information to anyone you don't know or haven't checked out.

Using ATMs, Long Distance Phone Services, and Credit Cards

Protect Your Personal Identification Number (PIN)

- Your PIN should be memorized, secured, and not given to anyone, not even family members or bank employees. The fewer people who have access to your PIN, the better.
- Never write your PIN on ATM or long distance calling cards. Don't write your PIN on a piece of paper and place it in your wallet. If your wallet and card are lost or stolen, someone will have everything they need to remove funds from your account, make unauthorized debit purchases, or run up your long distance phone bill.

Protect Your Privacy

- Be aware of others waiting behind you. Position yourself in front of the ATM keyboard or phone to prevent anyone from observing your PIN.

Protect Your ATM Cards

- An ATM card should be treated as though it were cash. Avoid providing card and account information to anyone over the telephone.
- When making a cash withdrawal at an ATM, immediately remove the cash as soon as the machine location before counting it. Never use an ATM in an isolated area or where people are loitering.
- Be sure to take your receipt to record transactions and match them against monthly statements. Dishonest people can use the receipt to get your account number. Never leave the receipt at the site.

Protect Your Credit Cards

- Only give your credit card account number to make a purchase or reservation you have initiated. And never give this information over a cellular telephone.
- Never give your credit card account number to someone else to use on your behalf.
- Watch your credit card after giving it to store clerks to protect against extra imprints being made
- Destroy any carbons. Do not discard into the trash can at the purchase counter. Keep charge slips in a safe place.
- Protect your purse or wallet, especially when travelling or in crowded situations.
- Save all receipts, and compare them to your monthly statement. Report any discrepancies immediately!
- Keep a master list in a secure place at home with all account numbers and phone numbers for reporting lost or stolen cards.

Lost or Stolen Cards

- Always report lost or stolen cards to the issuing company immediately. This limits any unauthorized use of your card and permits the company to begin the process of issuing a new card.
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Safety Tips for Runners and Walkers

(These tips are from the pamphlet "Get In Stride and Stay Safe, Safety Tips for Runners and Walkers," that is distributed by the National Crime Prevention Council, 1700 K Street, NW, Second Floor, Washington, DC 20006-3817, see <http://www.weprevent.org/>, the Bureau of Justice Assistance Office of Justice Programs U.S. Department of Justice, and ADT Security Services.)

Before You Leave

- Plan your outing. Always tell someone where you are going and when you will return. Tell friends and family of your favorite exercise routines.
- Know where telephones are located along the course.
- Wear an identification tag or carry a driver's license. If you don't have a place to carry your ID, write your name, phone number, and blood type on the inside of your athletic shoes. Include any medical information.
- Don't wear jewelry or carry cash.
- Wear reflective material.

On The Road

- Tell a family member or friend where you are going and the time you expect to be back.
- Stay alert at all times. The more aware you are, the less vulnerable you are.
- Run or walk with a partner, a dog, or both.
- Don't wear headsets. If you wear them you won't hear an approaching car or attacker. Listen to your surroundings.
- Consider carrying a cellular telephone.
- Exercise in familiar areas. Know which businesses or stores are open.
- Vary your route
- Avoid unpopulated areas, deserted streets, and overgrown trails. Especially avoid poorly lighted areas at night.

- Run clear of parked cars or bushes.
- Ignore verbal harassment. Use discretion in acknowledging strangers. Look directly at others and be observant, but keep your distance and keep moving.
- Run against traffic so you can observe approaching vehicles.
- Trust your intuitions about a person or an area. React based on that intuition and avoid areas you feel unsure about.
- Be careful if anyone in a car asks you for directions - if you answer, keep at least a full arm's length from the car.
- If you think you are being followed, change direction and head for open stores, theaters, or a lighted house.
- Have your door key ready before you reach your home.
- Call police immediately if something happens to you or someone else, or you notice anyone out of the ordinary. It is also a good idea to check with police about any criminal activity in the area you plan to run.

Running and Walking in the Evening or Early Morning

- Make sure people can see you: Think about where you are going and how well lighted it may or may not be. Going out at dusk or at night is dangerous without some reflective device on your clothing. Many athletic shoes have reflective qualities built in, but also consider a vest complete with reflective tape.
- Watch the road: Wet or even patchy spots of ice may not be seen until it's too late. The slick spots can lay in waiting and are considerably harder to see in the dark.
- Keep alert. Dawn and dusk offer convenient shadow for muggers and other crooks.

Away From Home

- Check with the hotel staff or concierge to find a safe route for exercise. If there is not an acceptable place to exercise outdoors, see if the hotel can arrange for you to go to a health club or gym.
- Become familiar with your exercise course before you start. Get a map and study it.
- Remember the street address of the hotel. Carry a card with your hotel address along with your personal ID.
- Leave your room key with the front desk.
- Follow your usual safety rules.