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Don't Let The Grinch (Thieves) Steal Christmas

Special thanks to the Calgary Police Service Crime Prevention Unit for their input.

The Christmas season is prime time for car prowlers and thieves. Gifts and valuables in vehicles make their jobs easy. Here are a few tips to help reduce your risk:

- When you exit or enter your parked vehicle, stop and take a look around the area.
- Before leaving your parked car, always remove the keys, roll up the windows and lock the doors.
- Park in a well-lit area, use parking lots frequented by others and avoid parking behind fences or hedges. A prowl attempt is more likely in darkened or secluded areas.
- Put all valuables and gifts in your trunk. If that's not possible, conceal gifts and other valuables. A car prowler will almost always look inside a car for valuables before risking a break-in. Keeping valuables out of sight reduces your risk.
- Try not to unload gifts in your vehicle and then leave it unattended in the same parking spot. Car prowlers might be on the lookout for shoppers traveling back and forth from stores to unload gifts.
- Never leave your car running unattended. Vehicles are commonly stolen at ATMs, convenience stores and self-serve gas stations.
- If possible, store your vehicle in a closed and locked garage.
- If you park in an attached garage, always lock the door leading from the house to the garage and the garage door.
- If you don't park in a secure garage at home, don't leave gifts in cars overnight to keep them secret. Plan some way to move them inside the home undetected or have your gifts wrapped before you bring them home.
- If your car is stored in a carport or parked near your house, leave your exterior lights on throughout the night. Motion sensor lights work well in this situation.
- If you park on the street, choose a well-lit, open space even if it means adding extra street/yard lighting & trimming back trees/bushes blocking your view of your vehicle.
- Consider replacing the light fixture closest to your car with a motion detector unit. Motion detectors are good psychological deterrents as the normal assumption of a person seeing a light come on is that someone has seen them. The light also makes the prowler or thief more visible.
- After opening an automatic gate to underground parking, wait for the gate to close before you park. Watch out for thieves waiting to slip in behind you.
- Avoid parking in attended lots. They're a major source of copied keys which can be used later to steal your vehicle and valuables.

Prevent crime by reporting suspicious behaviour to police at 403 266-1234.
Call 911 for a crime in progress.

If your car is broken into:

- Inventory missing articles for later use with the police or an insurance claim.
- Report online at www.calgarypolice.ca/onlinereporting. Even if there's little chance of catching the suspect, alerting the police can help prevent somebody else's car from being prowled.