

Cold weather and the Increase in Vehicle Thefts

With cold air returning to the region this time of year, you are reminded to be vigilant regarding warm-up thefts. Warm-up thefts occur when a vehicle is left running because the driver wants to warm the vehicle up before leaving. Criminals looking for a crime of opportunity will take advantage of the moment and drive off in the unoccupied vehicle. With snow and sub-zero temperatures, this is a prime time for thieves to be out looking to steal an unattended vehicle. Vehicles stolen have ranged from high-end to low-end in value and it does not appear that a specific make or model has regularly been targeted.

There are times when the weather requires us to warm up our vehicle and defrost the windows, but you should never leave the vehicle unlocked and unattended with the keys inside. When you have to warm up a vehicle try some of the following steps to decrease the chances of your vehicle being stolen or lessen the impact if it is stolen:

Never leave your vehicle unattended and running even for short periods of time.

If you don't want to sit in the vehicle as it warms up, stand just inside the doorway and never take your eyes off your vehicle. If you see someone around your vehicle utilize the "HORN" button on your keyless entry to activate the horn and scare the person away.

Have two keys. Start your vehicle using a spare key so that you can lock the doors while the vehicle runs. If you have a keyless entry use a two-piece key ring. Put your ignition key on the detachable part of the ring and keep your keyless remote on the other half with your other keys. Never leave more than your ignition key in the vehicle while it warms up. If you leave other keys, such as home or business keys in the vehicle, and the vehicle is stolen, the thief will have more than just your vehicle.

Use some type of steering wheel locking device such as the "Club" while warming up the vehicle.

Don't leave remote garage openers in your vehicle.

Invest in a vehicle alarm system so you can activate the alarm as the vehicle warms up. Just remember an alarm does not replace locking the doors and watching the vehicle.

Keep your vehicle registration on your person, not in your vehicle. If the vehicle is stolen you will have the important information such as license plate number and VIN number with you.

Equip your vehicle with a keyless remote starter.

Remember that although we have insurance to cover things such as vehicle theft, a part of the reason for higher insurance premiums is due to the high number of stolen autos. Insurance often does not cover personal property that was inside the vehicle and nobody is immune from the stress and time lost because of a stolen vehicle.