



## FSA - Keeping You Safe

### How to Avoid Vehicle Theft

Thieves look for easy targets, and an unlocked car is just about as easy as it gets. In the United States, a vehicle is stolen every 39 seconds, and valuable items are stolen from inside cars every day. There's good news, however – vehicle theft is often a preventable crime.

Implementing a few simple safety practices, including the 9 p.m. routine, can go a long way in keeping your belongings safe. While locking your car only takes a moment, it can save you a lot of hassle in the long run. **Here's what you need to know to prevent vehicle theft.**

#### Basic Vehicle Theft Prevention Tips

According to the United States Department of Transportation, over half of vehicle thefts are due to driver error (such as leaving your doors unlocked). Even if the car itself is not taken, stolen items often include firearms, purses, phones, laptops and other tech, such as a GPS. Some thieves steal valuable car parts to resell.

A few steps you can take to protect yourself from vehicle theft, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation, include:

- Never leave your keys inside the car once parked;
- Park only in well-lit areas;
- Lock the doors and close all the windows, and
- Never leave valuables inside your car – particularly where they are visible.

Each time you park your car, make it a practice to check for items you shouldn't leave inside.

#### The 9 p.m. Routine

Theft can occur anywhere, whether out in public or in the safety of your own driveway. To keep your car and other possessions safe, consider adopting the 9 p.m. routine. The idea was invented by the Pasco Sheriff's Office and has since become widely popular. It's simple, effective and only takes a few moments.

To implement the 9 p.m. routine, set a daily alarm for 9 p.m. (or whenever you are typically winding down for the evening). When the alarm goes off, complete a set number of tasks to secure your belongings.

For more tips please visit the Florida Sheriffs Association's Crime Prevention Tips: [flsheriffs.org/crime-prevention](http://flsheriffs.org/crime-prevention).

## **Your 9 p.m. routine may include:**

- Removing valuables from your car.
- Closing car windows and locking doors.
- Turning on exterior house lights.
- Ensuring that doors to your home are locked.

Of course, the 9 p.m. routine looks different for everyone, but following these basic steps can go a long way in protecting yourself from theft.

## **What To Do If You're the Victim of a Crime**

While it's helpful to take preventative safety measures, some circumstances are outside of your control. Determined criminals will find a way to steal possessions, including vehicles - even ones that are locked. Only 56 percent of stolen vehicles are recovered, so time is of the essence when reporting the crime.

If your car is stolen, contact law enforcement immediately. Report the make, model and color of your vehicle, as well as your license plate number and Vehicle Identification Number (VIN). Not sure who to contact? [Click here](#) for a directory of sheriffs' offices in Florida. It's also important to file a claim with your insurance company as quickly as possible.

If you believe items have been stolen from your car, you should also contact law enforcement to report the crime. This is true even if nothing valuable has been taken. Your report might help bring awareness to a pattern or prevent future crimes.

## **Stay Informed With FSA**

Locking your car doors and turning on the exterior house lights might not feel like a big deal, but they could be the deterrents that stop a thief from stealing your wallet or even your car. Don't be an easy target. Stay vigilant, stick to the 9 p.m. routine and know what to do when a crime occurs.

[Click here](#) for more crime prevention tips from the Florida Sheriffs Association.