

# How can I reduce my risk of being carjacked?

## Armed theft ... the newest twist in automobile theft

Imagine having someone approach you while you're sitting in your car at a traffic signal, pointing a gun at your face and taking your car. Or, having your vehicle stolen as you park (even in your own driveway), or while getting gas.

It can happen anywhere, not just in "high crime" neighborhoods. It can occur during the daylight as well as after dark.

## Why is carjacking on the increase?



- It's a crime of opportunity—a thief searching for the most vulnerable prey. Sometimes it's part of another crime. Car thieves find it easier to steal a car while the owner is there—with the keys in the ignition—than to break into a car, especially if the car has an alarm.
- Cars equipped with sophisticated, built-in alarm systems and theft-deterrent devices are becoming harder to steal.
- Cars, especially luxury models, provide quick cash for drug users and other criminals.

Carjacking may be a rite of passage, an initiation act, or just a thrill for some.

## Windows of opportunity that carjackers look for:

- Intersections controlled by traffic lights or stop signs.
- Parking garages, shopping malls and grocery stores.

- Self-service gas stations and car washes.
- ATMs (automated teller machines).
- Residential driveways and streets as people get in and out of their cars.
- Highway exit and entry ramps or other places where drivers slow down or stop.



## Before you enter your car . . .

- Be alert to any activity near your car. Pay attention to your surroundings.
- When approaching your car, have your key in your hand, and check the back seat before getting in.
- If someone is loitering near your unoccupied car as you approach it, keep walking until the person leaves.
- Be wary of people asking for directions or handing out flyers. Trust your instincts—if something makes you feel uneasy, get in the car quickly, lock the doors, and drive away.

## Once you're in your car . . .

- Keep your doors and windows locked, no matter how short the distance or how "safe" the neighborhood.
- Avoid driving alone. Have someone with you whenever possible, especially at night.
- When you're coming to a stop, leave enough space to maneuver around other cars. If you sense trouble, this will allow you the room needed to get away.
- If a suspicious-looking person approaches your car, drive away carefully. In extreme situations, you might even consider going through a

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traffic light, as long as you can do so without causing an accident.

- Drive in the inside (center) lane to make it more difficult for would-be carjackers to approach your car.
- Don't stop to assist a stranger whose car was broken down. Instead, help by driving to the nearest phone and calling the police to help.
- If you're driving home and notice someone you don't recognize, drive around the block and come back after the person has left.

## Getting out

- Park in well-lighted area, near sidewalks or walkways. Avoid parking near dumpsters, woods, large vans or trucks, or anything else that limits your visibility.
- Never leave valuables in plain view, even if the car is locked. Put them in the trunk or out of sight.
- Try to park in a garage with an attendant. Leave only the ignition key, with no personal identification.
- Even if you're rushed, look around before you get out and stay alert to your surroundings.



## If it happens to you ...

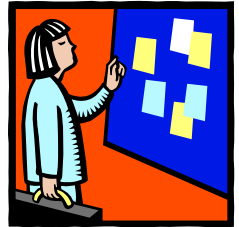
- If a carjacker threatens you with a gun or other weapon, give up your car. Don't argue. Your life is worth far more than a car.
- Get away from the area as quickly as possible.
- Notice and remember what the carjacker looked like—sex, race, age, hair and eye color, special features, clothes and anything specific or unusual like an accent.

- Report the crime immediately to the police.

## Take action

- Work with your Pembroke Pines Crime Watch group, law enforcement, automobile clubs and other concerned groups to get the word out about carjacking prevention.
- Contact school officials to make sure that driver education classes talk to teens about preventing carjacking.
- Ask the local media to air carjacking prevention tips as public service announcements, perhaps during commuting hours.
- Ask your insurance agent or company to provide carjacking and other auto
- Theft-prevention information in notices and bills.
- Enlist parking lot owners, shopping mall security, and transit authorities to print and distribute educational materials with car-jacking prevention tips.

- Get permission to place carjacking-prevention flyers or brochures in the waiting rooms of automobile service departments, repair shops, and gas stations.



- Ask your state's Motor Vehicle Administration to display carjacking and auto-theft prevention advice--posters, handouts, etc., in its offices--and distribute prevention tips in all mailings.