



▶ AUTO BURGLARIES ARE ON THE RISE! ARE YOU PROTECTING YOUR PROPERTY PROPERLY?1



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Alhambra Neighborhood Watch newsletter

WORKING TOGETHER FOR SAFER ALHAMBRA NEIGHBORHOODS

WHAT IS YOUR CAR SCREAMING OUT TO THIEVES?



What Do You Keep In Your Automobile?

Can you guess what property is being taken from parked cars? Would you guess,

- Backpacks, gym bags, briefcases, day-planners?
- Cash/coins, checkbooks and credit/debit cards?
- Wallets and purses (*even when hidden under a seat or in an unlocked glove compartment*)?
- Laptop computers, iPods and MP3 players, (*and docking stations*)?
- Cell phones (*and chargers*)?
- Portable GPS navigation systems?
- Stereo/CD players (*and faceplates*), amps, speakers (*even when bolted down!*)?
- Jewelry, keys, mail (*identity theft*), tools?
- **Anything** of obvious value?

If you said "Yes" to all of the above, you would be correct! Chances are you keep one or more of these items inside your car and visible to thieves when you leave it unattended—and we know what opportunistic thieves are. It generally takes a mere few seconds to secure your valuables, but it will take only a few seconds more for a thief to break in and steal valuables left in plain sight.

Auto-burglary prevention, like all crime prevention, involves limiting the criminal's ability and/or opportunity to commit the crime. With very little time and effort, you can make a huge difference in your vulnerability to auto-burglary.

The first thing you can do to help: **Don't leave valuables in your car** - particularly not in plain sight!

Are your valuables VISIBLE? Don't be the next car burglary victim! The last thing you need is to find your vehicle's window broken or items missing. We suggest taking these simple but important steps to maintain your car's safety:

Don't leave valuables in your car.

That sounds like "common sense", but drivers/passengers do leave items of value in plain view every day. If you leave valuable items visible in your car, your car is automatically a target.

If you must leave valuable items in your car while out and about, place items out of sight before reaching your destination or move them inconspicuously. This includes packages, backpacks, gym bags, GPS units, MP3 players, and so forth. Someone may be watching when you put items under a seat or throw something over them. An opportunistic thief is on the lookout for trunk-packing, and can break into your car the minute you're out of sight.

If you can't take them with you, at least **lock** the items in your glove compartment (*if capable of locking and large enough*) or your trunk (*if you have one*).

One reason SUVs and pickups are common auto-burglary targets is because they don't have a "trunk" to hold valuables — the driver/passenger generally just

"hides" their valuables "out of sight". The thieves know this, and do check glove compartments, behind seats, and under seats. It only takes a few seconds to check all the "usual" hiding places.

Unobtrusively locking everything valuable "in the trunk" (*if you have one*) may be difficult when you're combining errands at multiple destinations. Certainly avoid leaving packages or shopping bags visible in your car — lock them in the trunk out of sight if you have to leave packages in your car unattended. Plan your shopping/errands so that you don't load your trunk until you are **ready** to drive to another destination; never open a trunk, fill it full of valuables, close it, and then just walk away.

Taking advantage of free home delivery offered by many merchants is one way to protect your purchases while making your shopping far more enjoyable.

Keep your car in good operating condition and always have plenty of gas to get "there and back" (*it costs no more to keep the top quarter of the tank filled than to keep the bottom quarter-tank filled!*); you don't want to have to leave your car (*and valuable contents*) sitting along the side of the road if that can be avoided.

Once home, unload your valuables immediately. Do not store valuables in your car any longer than necessary, and certainly never overnight.

If your trunk can be opened from inside your car without a key, **lock** this feature when you are not in your car or **have it disabled**, if possible.

Leave no trace. Don't leave **any** "sign" that there might be valuables "out of sight" in your vehicle, such as docking stations or connector cables. Leave nothing in "plain sight" that might make your vehicle worth "investigating" by a thief; not even loose coins or a CD.

Just leaving an empty docking station in plain sight, even if you've taken the high dollar component with you, may end up costing you hundreds of dollars to replace a broken window because the thief wanted to check your car for "hidden" valuables. Very few auto break-ins are "random" — the thieves see "something" in plain sight that's valuable, or hints of possible hidden valuables.

If you have an after-market stereo/CD-player with a removable faceplate, remove it. Without the faceplate, the unit is less attractive/useful to many thieves, and harder to "fence". If the unit can be pulled, pull it! Take it with you. Just covering a valuable radio (*or ANY valuables in your car*) with something (*like a blanket or towel*) to hide it will probably only draw thieves' attention.

Try to park in busy, well-lighted areas. Try to park in well-traveled areas. Large anonymous lots are hit by thieves much more often than parking immediately adjacent to residential housing or other occupied buildings. On a busy campus, day or night, "picking" your parking spot is easier said than done — but try to choose a well-lighted, visible, parking spot where there is lots of vehicular and pedestrian movement when possible. Auto-burglars prefer breaking into cars where they will not be observed or attract notice, and choose their targets accordingly.

Lock ALL your vehicle's doors even if you plan to be gone for only a brief time. Every year, we have items stolen from unlocked vehicles where the owner was only going to be gone "just for a second". It only takes seconds to steal your stuff! It's not at all uncommon for thieves to walk down a row of parked vehicles and check vehicle doors to see if they are unlocked. Don't leave **any** window open or even cracked open, including vent/wing windows and sunroofs.

Set any alarm or anti-theft device. If you have one, use it! Many people believe that car-alarms no longer make a difference, but they can be an effective deterrent to an auto-burglar, who most often chooses the **easiest** target. If they have two cars to choose from, one with an alarm and one without, they will likely burglarize the one without (*unless you've left out valuables just too good to ignore!*)

Locking your car and setting your alarm is just part of the solution. Even if locked and alarmed, if you leave valuables (*or the hint of valuables*) in plain sight, a thief may target your car, even knowing it's locked and alarmed. But, without a clear prize in sight, a locked/alarmed car will likely be bypassed for an easier "target of opportunity".

Don't think your dark tinted windows will hide your valuables. Thieves often use flashlights to see through tint, and after-market tint is handy to keep all the broken glass in one "sheet" when they break out your window (*and toss the broken window into your back seat or passenger seat to hide the evidence of the break-in from passersby*).

Don't use "hide-a-keys". Thieves know the best places to hide those. But remember, just "locking" isn't enough. Keep your car OFF the target list of the thieves by keeping all hints of valuables totally out of sight. If they see something tempting, they certainly **can** break in.

**DON'T BE A VICTIM!
MOVE IT OR LOSE IT!**

30 seconds it takes for a thief to break into your car and steal your valuables!
20 seconds it takes you to at least move valuables into your trunk, out of sight!

**Better yet, take them with you!
Don't leave valuable items in your car!**



For The "To Do List" 2009 Block Captains Workshop

When: March 18, 2009 / 6:30pm to 9:00pm
(A Wednesday Evening)

Where: Alhambra Public Library—Community Room
101 S. First Street, Alhambra, CA
(the Community Room is on the Second Street side of the Library)

How is your Neighborhood Watch Group doing? Is it healthy and growing strong, or could it use a little NPR (Neighbor Participation Resuscitation)? If your group is feeling a bit tired and run down, and needs a little "umph" to get it back on track, the Block Captains Workshop is just the remedy. And it's not just for Block Captains, but for all Watchers interested in maintaining safer, friendlier, and crime free neighborhoods.

The 2009 Workshop promises to offer some really great ideas to keep the Neighborhood Watch spirit alive with topics such as, "CERT: The Neighborhood Disaster Preparedness Team"; "Observation Tips—Keeping the "Watch" in Neighborhood Watch"; "Crime Wise—Neighborhood Crime Alerts", and an Open Forum to hear from YOU and all the folks on the front lines of Neighborhood Watch groups.

Since the Block Captains Workshop is about education and information, tell us what you want to talk about! Send your ideas and comments for discussion at the workshop to the Crime Prevention Office at e-mail address: crimeprevention@alhambrapd.org, or by calling the crime prevention office at (626) 570-5177.

We look forward to seeing you March 18, 2009!

2008 Crime In Review

Alhambra's 2008 Crime Statistics are in and the news is *good!* Overall there were 2,666 Part One Offenses in Alhambra during 2008, a decrease of 4.17% from the 2,782 actual offenses reported in 2007.

Part One crimes are considered "major" crimes and are reported to the FBI for inclusion in the national, Uniform Crime Report. Crimes having the "Part One" designation are:

- Murder (down 50% in Alhambra)
- Rape (no change)
- Robbery (down 18.75%)
- Assault (down 8.91%)
- Residential Burglary (down 3.36%)
- Theft (down 2.16%), and
- Grand Theft Auto (down 7.36%)

What do these statistics mean to Alhambra Neighborhood Watchers? It means your efforts are paying off! Residential burglary reports have fallen to less than 300

a year from a high of 344 in 2005. The number of Alhambra homes falling victim to burglary in 2008 (287 homes) were ten fewer than the number of reported residential burglaries in 2007. In 2005, 560 vehicles were stolen within Alhambra's city limits. The number of stolen vehicles has fallen steadily over the past three years and in 2008, the number of stolen vehicles fell to 365.

