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Beverly Hills Police Department Provides Auto-Burglary Prevention Tips

Over the past weekend, the City of Beverly Hills experienced an increase in thefts from automobiles in the north end of the city. These thefts occurred even though an individual was arrested for auto burglary on Friday, September 25, 2009. The Beverly Hills Police Department urges residents to familiarize themselves with the following prevention tips and asks that they immediately report any suspicious activity by calling BHPD at 310-550-4951 or call 911.

AUTO-BURGLARY PREVENTION TIPS

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.

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.

Try to park in busy, well-lighted areas. Try to park in well-traveled areas. 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".

What Items are Most Commonly Stolen from Vehicles?

- 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