



# NEWS RELEASE

## HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF POLICE OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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### **Police remind residents: always lock your car** *Vehicle theft and theft from vehicle can be prevented*

Howard County police are reminding residents to always lock their cars and take the keys with them. Residents should never leave their cars warming up or leave keys in their vehicles for any reason, even for a short while.

Out of over 200 vehicle thefts so far this year, at least 46 were stolen using the vehicle's keys. In some incidents, vehicles were left running with the keys in the ignition. In others, keys were left inside the vehicle or taken from another vehicle in the driveway.

In just the last month, over 150 thefts from vehicles have been reported. In the majority of these incidents, the vehicle had been left unlocked, many with valuables inside. Stolen items included cash, wallets, purses, sunglasses and jewelry, among other items.

These incidents have occurred in residential neighborhoods county-wide.

According to the Maryland Vehicle Theft Prevention Council (MVTPC), a car is stolen every 40 minutes in Maryland. Nationwide, one is stolen every 45 seconds. Of these thefts, 50% of the vehicles had the keys left inside and 60% had been left unlocked.

Police suggest residents follow these tips to prevent both vehicle theft and theft from vehicle:

- **Lock your car and take the keys with you.**
- Never leave your car running unattended.
- Close and lock all doors and windows when you park.
- Never leave valuables in your vehicle.
- Park in well-lit areas, such as a garage, if possible.
- Use a steering wheel lock or alarm with an ignition-disabling device.
- Install a vehicle recovery tracking system in your vehicle.

Residents should also consider registering for "Watch Your Car," a free program administered by MVTPC that is designed to deter auto theft and assist in the apprehension of thieves. Registration information is available at HCPD.org under Crime Prevention.

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