

## Thieves going after items left overnight in vehicles

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Despite increased patrols in Austin neighborhoods by law enforcement officers, the community has been beset recently by thieves going after items left in vehicles.

Major Donald Spicer, the Austin Police Department's Director of Public Safety, said a marked increase in the number of thefts has occurred in recent weeks. Most vehicles had been parked outside homes overnight.

The thieves' mode of operation is simple, said Maj. Spicer. "You look inside the vehicle and if you see something you want, you break out the window and take it," he related.

In a few cases, the vehicle had been left unlocked. That should never happen, said Maj. Spicer. "Anytime you're leaving your vehicle, even in your own driveway, you should lock it."

Valuables should never, ever be left in a vehicle, he added. Money has been stolen as well as GPS devices and purses. "If you can see the item as you're leaving your car or truck, you know a thief could spot it also. Always take your valuables with you. If that isn't possible, hide them or put them in your trunk. You should make it very difficult for any dishonest person to take your items," he cautioned.

If possible, vehicles should be locked away in garages, but Maj. Spicer said in many cases investigated recently, there was no such structure available.

"The best defense really is offense in sports as well as crime fighting. Protecting yourself and your belongings should always be on your mind," he said.