



Winnetka Police Department

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Unlocked Vehicles Are Targets

Unlocked vehicles continue to be targeted for burglary and theft. This past weekend Winnetka experienced three motor vehicle thefts and numerous vehicles that were unlawfully entered and rummaged through. The incidents occurred during overnight hours where vehicles were parked in a driveway/alley. In one case, an unlocked vehicle was entered and the garage door opener was used to open the overhead door and steal a vehicle from inside the garage. All of the vehicles entered were unlocked and the vehicles that were stolen contained the key/fob.

The individuals committing these crimes have been linked to Chicago area street gangs. Many are youthful offenders and are known to carry weapons. The targeting of unlocked vehicles has afflicted the northern and western suburbs for over a year. Local law enforcement has worked collaboratively to investigate, identify and arrest those responsible for committing these crimes. Detectives who have interviewed offenders learned that gang members refer to the north shore as "candy land" because they can pick out any type of vehicle they want and have little trouble stealing it as they know people leave their key/fob in the unlocked vehicle.

Often times when the police locate a stolen vehicle and initiate a traffic stop, the offenders flee at a high rate of speed and drive with no regard for public safety. The offenders frequently crash the vehicle and run from the scene. One stolen vehicle that was recovered in Chicago was found with multiple bullet holes and other damage. If this was your vehicle, would you want it back? More importantly, what if your vehicle was used in the commission of a crime that led to the death or serious injury of another person? We need to change our mindset when it comes to the security of vehicles. When criminals get the message the north shore is no longer "candy land" and residents secure their property, we will go a long way in reducing the crimes that are being committed.

While it may be convenient for you to leave a key/fob in your vehicle, it is also convenient for a criminal. The Winnetka Police Department needs your assistance in helping prevent future crimes. When it comes to your vehicles, REMOVE your valuables, TAKE your key/fob, and LOCK your vehicle.

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