



Spirit Lake Police Department

Preventing Vehicle Prowling

Vehicle prowling, the theft of property from your vehicle, is an increasingly persistent crime in many communities.

What Do They Steal?

- Expensive mobile electronics, like stereo systems, CD's, cell phones, ipods, ipads, tablets and more.
- Wallets, purses, checkbooks, and cash.
- Tools, computer equipment, and even golf clubs have been popular items to steal.
- Your car registration, insurance information, or any document left in your vehicle that contains information about you. The information is then used to commit fraud and/or identity theft against you.

Any item of value is fair game to the vehicle prowler!

Why Do They Steal?

Motivations for vehicle prowling vary.

- The criminal may be supporting a drug habit and will go to great lengths to remove valuable items.
- The criminal sees it as an ideal opportunity to commit a crime with little risk of getting caught. In other words, you may have offered a "crime of opportunity."

How Do They Do It?

There are several approaches.

- The thief may roam a busy parking lot trying door handles in search of unlocked vehicles.
- If they notice something they particularly want, they may choose to break in. Breaking a window is a common method of entry.
- A vehicle parked in an isolated area is often targeted because the criminal's activity will go undetected.
- In residential areas, especially apartment complexes with a high concentration of vehicles parked outside, the cover of darkness is used to conceal their activity

What You Can Do!

- Securely lock your vehicle!
- Avoid parking your vehicle in an isolated area where other citizens will not be able to see it.
- If possible, park your vehicle in the garage. If you do not have a garage, park your vehicle in a well-lit area close to your residence. Avoid parking on the street or in dark areas.
- Keep your valuables out of site. Athletic bags, backpacks, purses, shopping bags or other containers are enticing objects to the prowler. When possible, remove them from your vehicle. At a minimum, lock them in your trunk.
- Any important document that a criminal could use to commit fraud and/or identity theft should be LOCKED in the glove box or removed from the vehicle. Sensitive information, like your name, date of birth, address, social security number and/or account numbers, is attractive to these types of criminals.
- Remove garage door remote controls from vehicles parked outside. If not removed, they may also enter your garage.
- Advertising your expensive stereo equipment by attaching large stickers to your vehicle of your chosen brand is not recommended.
- You may consider installing an alarm on your vehicle. Advertising your alarm with a sticker on your vehicle is recommended.
- Record brand name, model and serial numbers of all your valuable items. In the event your property is stolen, this will aid law enforcement in investigation and recovery efforts.
- Consider engraving your driver's license number on your valuable items with an electric engraver. This will help law enforcement determine status and ownership of property they encounter under questionable circumstances.
- Use the following format to engrave items like stereos, computers, tools and so on:

ID (license#) D.L.