



PENNSYLVANIA STATE POLICE

COMMUNITY AWARENESS BULLETIN

CAB 001-25

April 10, 2025

VEHICLE BREAK-INS

The Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) is advising residents of an increase in vehicle break-ins by a group of thieves who travel across the United States stealing identifications and checkbooks from unattended vehicles, specifically targeting women. The thieves then travel to the victim's bank disguised as the female victim in the identification and utilize stolen checks to withdraw money from the account, resulting in the loss of thousands of dollars to victims.

Incidents of vehicle break-ins mainly occur at locations where women are more likely to leave their purse and valuables inside their vehicle. These locations include gyms, shopping centers, state parks, movie theaters, funeral homes, and hotels. The thieves have stolen briefcases, purses, wallets containing credit and debit cards, checkbooks, identifications, electronics, and other items from inside vehicles parked at locations that are easily accessible to a major state highway.

The thieves sit in parking lots observing potential victims who will be away from their vehicles for an extended period of time. Once the victim(s) leaves the line of sight, the thieves approach the vehicle on foot and use a hammer or spring-loaded window punch to break a window gaining access to the vehicle. Following the theft, the thieves travel to an area nearby to commit identical thefts before continuing to the next location.

PREVENTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following preventative measures will help reduce the chances of you becoming the victim of vehicle break-ins:

- Maintain general awareness of your surroundings.
- Keep your doors locked at all times, even if your vehicle is parked at your residence.
- Close all windows and sunroofs.
- Park in a visible, well-lit area.
- If you have an SUV or wagon-type vehicle, consider installing a retractable cover over the cargo area to avoid valuables being seen in plain sight.
- Avoid leaving valuables and identifying information unattended within your vehicle.
- Place all items, including bags and electronics such as power plugs and adapters, out of sight.
- Consoles and glove boxes are obvious targets for thieves. Do not use these to store personal items.
- Store purchases in the trunk before arriving at your destination to prevent thieves from knowing there are valuables in the vehicle.

If you are the victim of a vehicle break-in:

- Contact the police and file a report.
- Alert your credit card providers of the theft to prevent fraudulent charges.
- Check your credit history and scores to make sure additional credit cards were not added using your identity.
- Consider adding a security alert to your credit history, which will provide additional protection if your Social Security Number was stolen.
- Report any stolen vehicle insurance card and vehicle registration to law enforcement, your insurance company, and the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. Thieves have been known to steal insurance and registration information and put them with stolen vehicles.



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REPORT SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY

- Suspicious individuals walking up and down in a parking lot looking into cars or trying door handles.
- Vehicles driving around parking lots at very slow speeds for extended periods of time while observing parked cars.
- People on bicycles or electronic scooters observing vehicles in a parking lot for an extended period of time.

The free *See Something, Send Something* smartphone application enables individuals to report suspicious activity by capturing a photograph, screenshot, and other information to send it directly to the PSP. Tips may also be sent to tips@pa.gov.



Individuals who witness a break-in or see a suspicious individual or vehicle should find a safe location to call 9-1-1. If you are the victim of a vehicle break-in, report the incident to the police immediately.