

Are You Safe?

Lock It Up!

From the Desk of Sheriff Bob Gualtieri

If you heard about a new, FREE device that prevents 80 percent of car burglaries with the push of a single button, would you want one? Lucky for you, the not-so-new technology is already available, and you almost certainly own it: vehicle door locks.

Last year, the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office responded to more than 1,300 vehicle burglary reports, 80 percent of which required "no forced entry." As the easily accessible temporary storage site for recent shopping purchases, expensive personal items, like laptop computers and cell phones, and often firearms, unlocked vehicles are major burglary targets.

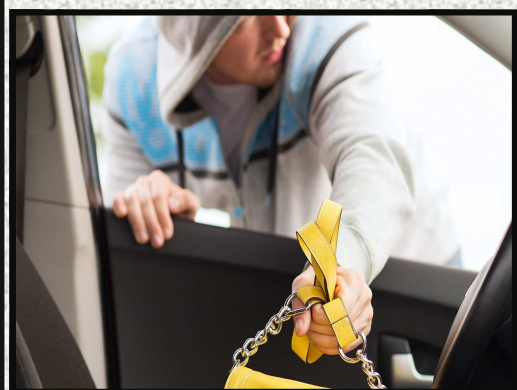
Of the 103 firearms stolen from vehicles in the Sheriff's Office's jurisdiction in 2015, 80 were taken from unlocked vehicles, and two were from vehicles left completely open.

In instances like these, vehicle burglaries can be more than just physically and financially inconvenient.

In 2013, 23-year-old Marco Antonio Parilla, Jr., shot and killed Tarpon Springs Police Officer Charles Kondek with a gun he had stolen from an unlocked vehicle.

Regardless of whether you're quickly running into the post office, warming up your car before you're ready to leave, or think you're parked in a "nice part of town," there is never a good excuse for leaving your vehicle unlocked and your belongings – including the vehicle itself – unprotected.

In addition to locking your car doors, there are several precautions you can take to prevent vehicle burglaries. For instance, if you must leave valuables in the vehicle, don't leave them on the seat or visible from the outside. If you store them in the trunk, place them there before you park in public, where burglars could be watching.



Park your vehicle in well-lit, public areas when possible. If your vehicle doesn't have an alarm, consider purchasing one. The noise alone is often enough to scare away inexperienced criminals. Combine these tactics with consistently locked doors, and the only thing those burglars will be breaking into is a run in the other direction.

This year, make a New Year's resolution that will protect you, your belongings, and your community: Make sure it's secure, and **LOCK IT UP!**

