



# PARTNERS IN CRIME PREVENTION

MARCH/APRIL 2021

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

<b>CAR THEFT— A CONTINUING PROBLEM</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CAR THEFT— HOW DO THEY DO IT?</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>CAR THEFT— PREVENTION TIPS</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>THEFT— CATALYTIC CONVERTERS</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>CAR PROWLS— AN OPPORTUNITY TO STEAL</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>CARJACKING— HOW YOU CAN PREVENT BEING CARJACKED</b>	<b>4</b>

## CAR THEFT— A CONTINUING PROBLEM

Car theft remains a problem in Snohomish County and the Puget Sound region.

During the early part of 2020 and the initial stages of the pandemic, in some areas around Puget Sound saw an increase in car thefts. Seattle, for example, saw a 30% increase in car thefts in the spring of 2020.

Snohomish County, however, has seen a slight decrease overall in car thefts during 2020. In 2017, an average of 7 vehicles were stolen in Snohomish County every day. In 2019 2,268 vehicles were stolen while in 2020 2081 were stolen. That is a reduction of 189 vehicles stolen per month in 2019 to 173 vehicles stolen per month in 2020. But even with this reduction, 5.7 to 6.2 vehicles are stolen per day in Snohomish County.

While the decline in auto thefts is a good trend, auto thefts still occur. A car is the second most expensive cost for a family, next to owning or renting a house. The theft of a car disrupts the life of the victim by taking away their ability to go to work, the grocery store, or a doctor's appointment. And the damage that car thieves can do to the car adds expense such as damaged ignition systems or damage to the exterior if the car thief crashes the car.

The Snohomish County Auto Theft Task Force (SNOCAT), made up of representatives from the Marysville Police Department, Snohomish County Sheriff's Office, and the Washington State Patrol, investigates car thefts in the county.

While they catch car thieves it takes time in many instances to put together their case for the prosecutor. You can help by getting into some simple habits that take away the opportunity for car thieves to take your car. In this way, you become an essential element to preventing auto theft.



Adam Fortney- Sheriff  
Snohomish County  
Sheriff's Office

3000 Rockefeller  
M/S 606  
Everett, WA 98201  
425-388-3393  
<http://sheriff.snoco.org>



## CAR THEFT- PREVENTION TIPS

For all vehicles:

- Park in a locked garage.
- If you are parking outside, do not have anything in view.
- Park in a well lit area where a lot of people are around.
- **LOCK YOUR CAR** and remove all keys including car keys, house keys, valet keys, etc.

If you have a pre-2000 vehicle consider some of these additional steps:

- Have a cut-off switch installed.
- Get the club or similar device to lock up your steering wheel.
- Have a locator device installed such as a GPS tracker or LOJACK.

## CAR THEFT- HOW DO THEY DO IT?

Car theft is a crime of opportunity. Car thieves usually take vehicles that are easy to break into and drive away.

Car thieves might have several motivations to steal a vehicle. They might “need” transportation to go somewhere. The car thief might want to use the car in another crime, such as a burglary. Steal a car, do the burglary, then dump the stolen car and drive off in their own car or another stolen car. If deputies find it, and suspect it was used in a crime, ownership will not lead to the thief. Sometimes car thieves will steal to sell the vehicle. Some sophisticated car theft rings might sell desirable cars overseas. Or the stolen car might be sold locally to unsuspecting buyers or to chop shops for parts.

In most cases, car thieves do not target specific vehicles, but take whatever vehicle is available and is easiest to take.

Frequently, car thieves will use a shaved key to enter a vehicle; especially older vehicles like 1990 era Hondas, Toyotas, Subaru’s, Ford and Chevrolet pickups. Then they start the car, sometimes doing damage to the ignition. Older vehicles are most susceptible to theft.

Newer vehicles, from 2000 and newer, have more sophisticated security measures that have helped to reduce their risk of being stolen. However, newer cars do get stolen. Reasons newer cars are stolen include:

- The doors are unlocked.
- Keys or key fobs are in it.
- The thief steals the keys/fobs in a burglary.
- The thief steals the keys/fob from an unattended purse in a casino or grocery store.

The National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB) estimates that between 2016 and 2018 nationwide, an average of 209 vehicles were stolen daily with keys or fobs left in them. Sophisticated security systems are only good if they are used. And the most effective way to use your newer car’s security is to take your key/fob with you when you leave your car.

From time to time there will be speculation on social media of devices that can intercept the signal between a car and a key fob. You can see demonstrations of such devices on You Tube. One SNOCAT detective with 6 years experience on the task force says that he has yet to see a vehicle stolen with an intercept device. Car thieves either use a shaved key, check the doors to see if they are open, like car prowlers, or find the keys in the car.

You are a key element in preventing car theft. By simply getting in the habit of taking your key/fob with you, you can take opportunity away from a car thief and return to your car where you left it.

## THEFT- CATALYTIC CONVERTERS

Over the past year, thefts of catalytic converters has gone through the roof in Snohomish County, the Puget Sound region, and nationwide.

Catalytic converters are the devices attached to a vehicle's exhaust system that help reduce emissions from its exhaust system.

In order to reduce those emissions, the catalytic converters use rare metals such as platinum, palladium and rhodium.

The rare metals have seen a dramatic increase in prices in the metals markets, making them attractive targets for thieves.

Catalytic converters are easy to steal, often taking only seconds with a battery operated saw. They are also very difficult to investigate. Police almost need to catch the thief in the act. There usually is not an identifying mark that associates a catalytic converter to a particular vehicle, such as the vehicles VIN number. So proving that a car load of converters is stolen is a difficult proposition for law enforcement.

Catalytic converter thieves often target vehicles that are easier to crawl under, such as SUV's and trucks, or are easy to lift such as the Toyota Prius.



Some things you can do to prevent your catalytic converter being stolen include,

- Park your vehicle in a locked garage.

- If you have to park your vehicle outside in your driveway, make sure it is well lit at night and have a camera system on your vehicle. And make sure your camera system is working properly.

- Adjust your car alarm to detect vibrations created by sawing.

- Install an anti-theft device, such as a cage, on your catalytic converter. Check with your mechanic or online for what can be done.
- Paint the catalytic converter with a high temperature fluorescent paint and etch your vehicle's identification number on the painted surface.
- When going through a public parking lot, call 911 if you see suspicious activity such as people working underneath a vehicle or someone who looks like they are acting like a lookout. Using a saw is not normal car maintenance behavior.

## CAR PROWL- AN OPPORTUNITY TO STEAL

*Car prowls continue to be a problem in the Puget Sound region.*

*Car prowlers will take anything they see in your car. Things that have been taken often include purses, wallets, cell phones, laptops, sports bags, and more.*

*Car prowlers work during the day in garages, parking lots of shopping centers, and at night in your neighborhood or condo/apartment complex parking lot.*

*To prevent your car from being prowled,*

- **LOCK YOUR CAR!**
- *Park in an area with a lot of foot traffic.*
- *At night park in a well-lit area.*
- *Don't leave anything in view in your vehicle!*
- *Stow away anything, valuable or not, that is with you in your trunk.*

## CARJACKINGS- HOW YOU CAN PREVENT BEING CARJACKED

Some national news agencies have pointed to an increase, nationwide, in carjacking's, especially in some major metropolitan areas.

This highly dangerous crime has not affected Snohomish County as much as some other areas. This chart shows the carjacking trends for the county up through April of this year:

Carjacks	2018	2019	2020	2021	Grand Total
Arlington PD		1			1
Edmonds PD			1		1
Everett PD	5	3	5	1	14
Marysville PD		1			1
Mountlake Terrace PD			1		1
SCSO	3	1	4	1	9
Snohomish PD	1				1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>28</b>

While dangerous because the perpetrator threatens violence or conducts violence on the victim, more car thefts are conducted per year than carjacking's.

Carjackers look for victims who they can overpower easily (smaller or older). People who are distracted, not aware of their surroundings, would also make for good targets.

Some ways that you can prevent a carjacking include,

- Avoid dark, high crime areas, especially if you are driving alone.

- Be aware of your surroundings. Be on the lookout for people hanging out near your car.
- Make sure that when you are driving, your windows are rolled up and that your doors are locked.
- Always have your phone on you and never leave it in the car.

• If you leave your car to quickly go into a store for example, take your phone and your keys with you and lock your car!

If someone wants to carjack your car, follow

these guidelines,

- Try to calm down.
- Don't be a hero, cooperate with the suspect.
- Do what he wants, give him your keys.
- Be observant, be a good witness. Observe what he was wearing, color of hair, how heavy, how tall, any distinguishing features, the direction of travel as he was leaving.

### OFFICE OF NEIGHBORHOODS

#### MAKING OUR NEIGHBORHOODS SAFER

<https://www.snohomishcountywa.gov/311/Office-of-Neighborhoods>

**Homeless Outreach-**  
Sgt. James Chelin  
Phone: (425) 508-8221  
Email: [james.chelin@snoco.org](mailto:james.chelin@snoco.org)

#### SHERIFF'S OFFICE CRIME PREVENTION WEB PAGE:

<http://www.snohomishcountywa.gov/289/Crime-Prevention>

### NEWSLETTER INFO

**EDITOR**  
Steve Moller

If you have questions regarding this newsletter or any articles that appear in it, please contact the editor at [neighborhoodwatch@snoco.org](mailto:neighborhoodwatch@snoco.org)

### TIP LINES



Snohomish County Sheriff's Office: 425-388-3845

<http://snohomishcountywa.gov/303/Anonymous-Tips>

Crime Stoppers of Puget Sound: 1-800-222-8477