

Neighbourhood Watch - Parking Lot Security

Parking lots can be dangerous. When they are dark, deserted or quiet, they feel more dangerous. Especially at night and if the parking lot is not well lit or supervised. Women in particular feel vulnerable in parking lots.

You can help preventing crime by making wise choices.

The advice in this brochure is directed at people who use parking lots and those who run them.

For People Who Use a Parking Lot

How to choose a parking lot/spot

- Try to find a parking lot that has:
 - **security** systems with either security guards and/or monitored security cameras. A supervised parking lot, with security cameras, is less inviting to thieves and intruders as they are more likely to be seen and removed.
 - **good lighting**. Burglars hate light – it lets you see where they are and what they are doing.
- Choose a parking spot that is:
 - in a well-lit area
 - near an occupied security office or parking lot attendant, exit or elevator
- If you can't immediately find a safe parking spot, drive around until you find one.

How to protect your vehicle from break-ins and theft

- Never leave your keys, wallet or credit cards in your car.
- Don't leave anything valuable in your car. If it's not there, it can't be taken.
- If you leave something in your car, put it in the trunk or in the back of a van or wagon with the privacy cover pulled so it can't be seen. If there's something visible in the car (like a shopping bag, purse or briefcase) then your car is more likely to be broken into and your things taken.
- Always lock your car. Burglars often check doors to see if they're locked. An unlocked door is an open invitation.

How to use a parking lot

- **Park near the entrance/exit where there will be the most people coming and going.** Other people act as potential witnesses and deter crime. The safest streets and sidewalks are the busiest ones. Likewise, a parking spot near the security guard office, near the entrance or exit or near the elevators will be safer than those further into the parking lot.
- Park next to someone else and walk away from your car with them.
- When you return to your car:
 - **If one is available, ask for an escort.** A co-worker may walk you safely to your car.
 - Have your car keys out and ready to unlock your car door.

- Check to make sure your car hasn't been broken into and that no one is in the back seat.
- Once inside your car, lock your doors and put any purse or bag out of sight to avoid a roadside smash and grab.
- **Trust your instincts.** If you don't feel safe going to your car, go to a public place and take a cab or use a ride-share service (Uber or Lyft) to get home and come back later.
- If you're a regular user of a parking lot, report to the parking lot operator any burned out lights or broken doors or signs.

If you own or operate a parking lot

- **Make it and keep it safe.** A safe parking lot will attract customers.
 - **Maintain good lighting.** Replace burned out or broken lights.
 - **Maintain exit signs, card readers, gates and security door locks** to keep out unwanted intruders.
 - **Keep it clean.** Remove trash and unwanted or illegally parked vehicles.
 - **Have your security people do regular walks-around** to make sure no one is in the parking lot who shouldn't be there.
 - **Install panic buttons** connected to security alarms and security guards.
 - **Install security cameras** so there is no place to hide.
 - **Use signs** to remind your customers to "**Lock it up**".