



# AMHERST POLICE DEPARTMENT

21 ACADIA STREET • AMHERST, NOVA SCOTIA • B4H 4W3 • (902) 667-7227 • FAX: (902) 667-0268

The Amherst area continues to be plagued by thefts from vehicles. In 2012, the Amherst Police Department investigated 98 incidents of thefts from vehicles. The majority of the 98 incidents involved several vehicles in close proximity to one another so the number of targeted vehicles was several hundred. The reality is that most of these thefts could have been prevented.

I have investigated many of these thefts in my career and one fact about these thefts has become clear to me. **Thieves look for the easiest target.** There is a term we use in Crime Prevention to describe the most effective way to prevent becoming a victim of crime. It is called "*Target Hardening*". Simply put this means taking the steps so you and your property are not seen by the thief as an easy target.

Here are some "*Target Hardening*" Tips to prevent being a victim of theft from your vehicle.

## 1. **Lock your vehicle.**

Locking your vehicles appears to be the best deterrent from would-be thieves. Our statistics show almost all of the thefts from vehicles involved unlocked vehicles. Our stats also showed when thieves encounter locked vehicles, they moved on to easier targets. Get into the habit of always locking your vehicle, at home or away; day or night; even inside your garage.

## 2. **Remove valuables from your vehicle.**

Leaving valuable items such as a purse or laptop case in plain view is setting yourself up to be a victim of this crime. The most common items stolen from vehicles are loose change, purses, cell phones, I-pods and GPS units. If you remove a GPS unit from your vehicle when it is parked, make sure you wipe any suction cup residue off the window as this is an indicator that a GPS unit may be in the vehicle. You should also remove charging cords or put them out of view as they are also an indicator of valuable electronics being in the vehicle. If you must leave valuables in your vehicle, ensure they are out of sight. A good location would be the trunk of the vehicle. Remember to

do this before you arrive at your destination. Thieves could be tipped off that you have valuable items in the trunk if they see you loading objects into it at a parking lot.

### **3. Park your vehicle in a well illuminated area.**

Vehicles that are set off in parking lots by themselves and away from lights are usually viable targets for thieves. Install a motion sensor light in your yard that covers the area where your vehicle is parked.

### **4. Install a Car Alarm**

While some people may think of a car alarm going off in a parking lot as annoying, you will rarely see car thieves hanging around these vehicles. A good car alarm can pay off in the long run.

### **5. Call The Police**

If you have something stolen from your vehicle report it to the police. We have recovered stolen property in the past but were unable to identify the owners as they had not reported the theft. Also report to police any suspicious persons walking in and out among cars, especially after dark or in the early morning hours. You may do so by calling the police line at 667-8600.