



WESTERVILLE DIVISION OF POLICE

Press Release

"Being There When Needed"

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Subject:	HABIT Reminder		
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WESTERVILLE DIVISION OF POLICE TO EXPAND PATROLS FOR THEFTS FROM VEHICLES; ISSUES REMINDER OF THE HABIT PROGRAM

During this holiday shopping season, the Westerville Division of Police reminds residents and visitors to take time to protect personal property in vehicles. The HABIT (**H**alt **A**uto **B**reak **I**ns **T**oday) program, re-implemented by the department in 2010, provides tips, education and information to prevent thefts from vehicles. During the holiday season, reserve officers and volunteers will expand patrols of area parking lots to help make this a safe and happy holiday season.

Thefts from vehicles are one of the most common crimes in a community like Westerville, and most often happen to unlocked vehicles. Locking your vehicle greatly reduces your chance of becoming a victim of theft.

- Always lock your vehicle when you are away from it, even if it is only for a few minutes.
- Never leave the keys in the ignition or the vehicle running. It is a great temptation to start a car so that it can “warm up” as the temperature drops. This is an invitation to having someone enter your vehicle and steal your personal belongings or, worse, your vehicle.
- Do not leave valuables inside a parked vehicle. Personal items like GPS units, laptop computers, brief cases, purses, cell phones, CD cases, iPods or Christmas gifts are common targets for thieves. Remember, if you can see an item inside your vehicle when you leave it, so can a thief.
- Lock valuables in the trunk, glove box or center console. If you have a van or SUV, use the cargo area cover to conceal them.
- When possible, park in a well-lit area. At home, park in your garage or in your driveway with the windows up and doors locked.

The Westerville Division of Police asks the community to report any suspicious activity in public parking lots or in neighborhoods.

- Call the non-emergency phone line at **(614) 882-7444**
- Identify yourself by name, address and phone number
- Report the type of crime (burglary, assault, suspicious person, or vehicle, etc.)
- State the location. Be as specific as possible.
- Provide a description of the suspect, whether armed, and how many suspects
- Provide a description of the vehicle, including license plate number
- Provide the direction of travel of the suspect, if applicable.
- Stay on the phone with the dispatcher until they tell you that you may hang up. (Unless you are in fear for your safety)