
Crime Prevention - Automobile Security

Carjacking: Caught Between A Steering Wheel and A Gun



The Process

Carjacking is the forceful theft of an occupied vehicle. Most carjackings happen in as little as 15 seconds, when the thief (generally armed) suddenly appears and demands the driver surrender the car. The FBI reports that the primary motives for carjacking are to secure transportation after robbing the driver to obtain transportation to commit another crime. Such as drug trafficking.

The FBI estimates that approximately 25,000 carjackings occur annually, nationwide. The FBI recorded approximately 177,500 carjackings between 1987 to 1992.

Different Scenarios

There are several different carjacking scenarios. Carjackers attack motorists at traffic lights, gas stations, parking lots, fast food drive-thrus and in other areas where they are stopped or exiting their vehicles. Carjacking gangs often employ the "bump and run" technique in which thieves in one car pull up behind an unsuspecting driver and bump the driver's car. When the driver gets out to inspect the damage, the thieves forcibly take control of the car.

Penalties For Carjacking

The Federal Anti-Car Theft Act of 1992 (FACTA) makes carjacking a federal offense, punishable by up to life imprisonment. The 1994 Crime Bill increases the punishment for carjackers, calling for the death penalty when an innocent victim is killed.

Car Jacking Eye-Openers

A FBI study found there are certain times you are more likely to become a victim of a carjacking:

- Most carjackings occur between 8 and 11 p.m .
 - Friday, Saturday and Sunday account for nearly half of all carjackings.
 - More carjackings occur in December (27%) than in any other month.
 - Fifteen metropolitan areas account for 90 % of carjackings.
 - Parking lots are the favorite areas for carjackers, followed by city streets, residential driveways, car dealers and gas stations.
 - In cases involving the use of weapons, 90 % involve handguns. Prevention Tips
 - Lock your car doors, even while driving. Many car- jackings occur at red lights, stop signs or drive-thrus.
 - When going to the gas station, turn off your car and lock your doors when going to pay the attendant.
 - When returning to your parked car, be aware of the surroundings. Glance in the back seat and under the car before opening car doors.
 - Install an anti-theft device that has a "panic" button you can activate if you sense trouble
 - Drive in the center lane when on highways: this reduces your chances of becoming a "bump and run" theft victim.
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