



To organize and support community partnerships to prevent crime and the fear of crime

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This document is available
at the Crime Prevention
Program website:

www.portlandoregon.gov/oni/cp

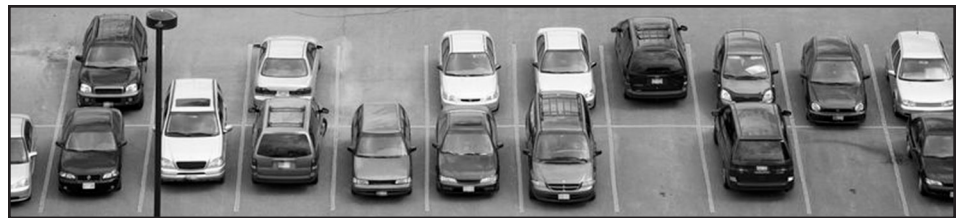


Car Prowl Prevention

Business Strategies for Parking Lots and Garages

Office of Neighborhood Involvement Crime Prevention Program
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Car prowling or theft from vehicles consistently ranks as one of the top three crimes in Portland and continues to be a problem city-wide. For parking lots and garages, there is a higher concentration of parked vehicles that are left unattended for hours at a time, which create opportunities for theft. Garages and lots that are not monitored by staff and have poor lighting, concealed areas, limited pedestrian traffic, and few access controls will be more vulnerable to theft. Additionally, where customers consistently leave items of value or perceived value in their cars, the garage or lot will be a desirable target for criminals. A car prowling can be completed in a minute or less. Methods of entry include entering into the vehicle through an unlocked door and breaking a window. The offender often will enter the parking area by foot and transport stolen items by backpack or bag. Items frequently stolen include GPS systems, laptops, electronic devices, documents with personal information, purses, wallets, luggage, gym bags, loose change, and cell phones.



Some of the crime happening in a parking garage or lot may be facilitated by the design of the property. Regardless, there are steps included below that you can take to reduce theft.

Criminals don't want to be caught. Where there are areas on your property that are difficult to observe, an offender can commit a crime with relative anonymity. Improving the visibility of your lot or garage will make your garage safer because employees, customers, or people walking or driving can witness what's happening and call the police. Some strategies that you can employ to improve the surveillance of your property:

- Install or upgrade lighting so that your property is well-lit and there are no dark areas that can conceal illicit activities. Lighting should be evenly distributed, vandal-resistant, and adequate for users to observe activities. Color rendition is an important consideration because it allows people to see colors and describe activity more accurately. Painting a light color on the walls and ceiling will provide additional illumination.
- Trim vegetation that obstructs views of the cars parked in your lot and pay machines.
- If there are nooks or blind spots on your property, add convex mirrors

to improve visibility or block access to those areas i.e. gate off the area under a stairwell.

- Install vandal-resistant security cameras, especially in places that are not monitored by staff or others. When purchasing a system, consider that it is just as much an apprehension tool as it is a deterrent. Picture quality and placement are all important factors.
- If possible, open up visibility in parking attendants' booths so that staff can monitor as much area of the parking lot or garage as possible. It may be helpful to move a booth to improve their vantage point.
- Encourage attendants to greet people as they enter the space. If an offender knows that you may be able to identify him or her, that increases the risk of apprehension.
- If you are located near a store or office where employees have visibility over your lot or garage, reach out to the owner and staff and ask them to report suspicious activity to the police and inform you of problems.
- Designate a few spaces on each floor of the garage as short term parking to direct more legitimate customers to walk through each floor of the garage and observe activities.
- Assign employees or hire a security company to perform random patrols.
- If you replace doors or other fixtures, consider buying products that improve visibility. For example, if you purchase new doors, make sure there are viewer windows so that customers can see what's happening in the space they are entering before they proceed. If you are making changes to a stairwell, buy see through hand rails and treads.

Access control is an important deterrent. Interventions that include the installation of locks and gates aim to decrease criminal access to property, especially into areas where a person with criminal intent would not easily be seen by others. A garage or lot can become more vulnerable to crime when there are more ways that offenders can enter and exit the property without notice. Prevention strategies include:

MORE CAR PROWL INFORMATION

Please see our brochure titled Car Prowl Prevention at <http://www.portlandoregon.gov/oni/cp>



- Direct people to enter the garage through the front entry where they will be seen by an attendant. This may mean that access into a stairwell or other door may be restricted.
- Install a fence around a parking lot or a mesh gate on the gaps above the wall to a garage to limit access.
- Make sure that parking meters and pay-boxes are secured and not easily removed with force and keep the cash stored in these machines to a minimum.

Customers play a crucial role in prevention. You can bring awareness to car prowling prevention efforts and encourage them to make a difference:

- Post signs reminding customers to remove those items that are valuable and perceived to be valuable from their vehicles.
- Post a sign encouraging customers to report suspicious activity to the police with a call to 9-1-1 for immediate threats to life or property and the police non-emergency number at 503-823-3333.