

## Property Crimes – Crime Prevention Tips

The most recent monthly Uniform Crime Report (UCR) report shows an increase in property crimes in St. Petersburg during the first four months of 2009.

None of us can alter a criminal's unlawful intent, but all of us can take a few simple steps to reduce or eliminate their opportunities to commit crimes by following our "Top Ten Tips" for reducing property crimes.

### **Auto Thefts**

The majority of auto thefts in St. Petersburg are committed by juveniles who use these cars for "joyriding" or to commit other crimes, so:

1. Always lock your vehicle, since nearly one-third of all stolen vehicles were unlocked.
2. Acquire an alarm system that disables the ignition.
3. Obtain and use an anti-theft device that locks the steering wheel.

### **Burglary**

A recent Department study revealed that most burglaries occur during the day, and that break-ins to unlocked homes increased significantly in 2008.

There were 885 residential burglaries to unlocked homes in 2007, but that number increased to 2,624 in 2008, a remarkable increase of 196%, so:

4. Owners of vacant structures should check their property frequently and establish good relationships with surrounding neighbors who can keep a protective eye on the property.
5. Remember that strong locks (that are used) and good neighbors who look out for one another are the most effective deterrents to burglars.
6. Keep all windows closed and locked while away from home and make sure every external door has a strong, well-installed dead bolt lock.
7. Make your home look occupied while you are away by keeping your yard clean and your blinds or curtains in their normal position. Consider using a timer to turn on radios or televisions to create the illusion that someone is home.

## **Auto Burglary**

Auto burglaries are often called the “Most Preventable Crime in America” because so many of them occur to an unlocked vehicle, so please remember to:

8. Always lock your vehicle, whether it is parked while you are shopping or at home.
9. Never leave personal items or electronic devices in plain view and remember that many newer car trunks can be accessed from inside the vehicle. It is best to never leave personal items inside of your vehicle.
10. When you go shopping, always scan the parking lot for suspicious people before exiting your vehicle to make sure no one is watching you.

Finally, remember to stay alert at all times and trust your instincts to avoid becoming a victim of any type of crime. If something looks wrong, it probably is wrong.

Never hesitate to report a suspicious person in your neighborhood by immediately calling our Communications Center at 893-7780.

If there is an emergency, always dial 911.