

Avoiding a Carjacking

By Mark "Six" James



Preparing for the Trip

Rule #1 Make sure your car is well-maintained. Please don't overlook the tire pressure. Not only does this prevent the likelihood of a possible breakdown, stolen abandon car, it also reduces the possibility of a potential abduction.

Know where you are going and choose your routes carefully; consider busy, well-lit roads. While you may encounter a little more traffic, you increase the likelihood of having others around in the event of trouble.

While short cuts and back roads may save us a little time, make sure those routes don't lead to isolated pinch points which are havens for criminals. Verify GPS directions before leaving for your trip. We all have GPS horror stories. Don't plan your route solely on your GPS's directions. Remember two rights or lefts will generally take us back to or toward our starting point.

Understanding the Anatomy of a Carjacker

Carjacking is typically a crime of opportunity. Professional predators look for easy prey. Other times carjacking is a crime of desperation, as criminals may be attempting to flee from other crimes and the carjacking becomes an act of desperation in an attempt to avoid being caught. Also as alarms systems and locking devices have become more sophisticated it is often easier to carjack as opposed to stealing an unoccupied vehicle.

Carjackings are often under reported as most states criminal codes don't have a separate category for carjacking so they are often lumped into either auto theft or armed robbery. They happen everywhere and are not just restricted to major cities. While a carjacking can take place anywhere the following are often considered high target opportunities by carjackers : ATMs, garages, gas stations, highway exit and entry ramps, intersections, mass transit lots, residential driveways and streets, stop lights and signs, self-service car washes.

On the Move

Keep your doors locked and windows rolled up while driving and parked. Even if you drive a convertible keep your doors locked. Consider navigating toward the center lane, when you are approaching a stop sign or intersection. This makes it more difficult for carjackers to approach when you're stopped in traffic or at an intersection. Don't be afraid to drive on the shoulder or sidewalk if necessary to avoid being carjacked.



- Always make sure you can see the rear tires of the car in front of you when stopped. This ensures you have enough turning radius to drive around a potential carjacker.
- Have an escape route at every intersection or whenever you are stopped.
- Check your mirrors frequently when you are stopped so you can monitor any suspicious activity around your vehicle.



- If this is a deadly force situation and you cannot drive around the threat consider driving into or over the threat! Even if you have a firearm driving into the threat is much more efficient. Most people don't shoot well while they are driving or drive well while they are shooting.

Parking Your Car

Park your car in a well-lit, busy area and as close to your destination as possible. Pay close attention at gas stations, drive-up ATMs and retail parking lots. Consider backing into spaces whenever possible. If you have to make a quick escape, most people drive forward better than they drive backwards. Be alert to anyone whose actions may be keyed off of yours. Avoid parking next to vans, motor homes, other high vehicles or dumpsters whenever possible. When preparing to park, keep your windows rolled up and the car locked even if parked at your own home or office.

Never leave your child in the car unattended, not even "for a minute." There are countless stories of parents returning to their cars only to find the car stolen and their child abducted. Park your car and take your kids and your keys with you. Keep your valuables in the trunk or hidden whenever your car is parked. Place your valuables in your trunk before you get to your final destination to avoid criminals seeing you relocating your valuables.



Have your door key in your hand if you don't have remote locks when returning to your car so you are ready to make a quick entry and departure. If you have a remote key and alarm, keep your hands on your remote key alarm. Look around outside and inside before getting in your vehicle. If attacked your keys may be used as an improvised weapon.

Going Home

If you think you are being followed, don't go home - drive to a police station or a busy public place where you can call the police. Give the police the route you are traveling and allow the police to intercept your vehicle.

Consider backing into your garage even at home:

- If a carjacker is attempting to attack you in your garage and they don't have a weapon, just drive past them and call 911 from a safe location.
- If the carjacker is armed consider running over them or pinning them with the front quarter panel of your vehicle into the sidewall of the garage. Good news is they will still be there when the police arrive.

Accident Considerations

Be alert to the swoop and stop. This is a regular tactic of carjackers. The carjacker pulls in front of you and suddenly stops, causing you to run into the rear of their vehicle. Also be alert to minor rear end collisions. Anytime you are a party in an accident before you get out, check to make sure that there are other cars around. If the situation seems suspicious, stay in the car and insist on moving to a well-lit area or a police station to exchange information.

If you are approached by a stranger, don't roll down the window or open your car. If you feel threatened, use your car's horn to signal for help or get a good description of the car and driver . Call 911 and let them know you are part of an accident and you are not trying to hit and run, you just felt concerned for your safety and ask them where they can meet you to file a report or return to the scene.

