



## **Update on regional efforts to combat vehicle-related crimes**

**And a note about protecting your personal information**

### **A Note from Major Hawkins Bureau of Community Policing Commander, Brentwood Police**

Well, well, well, if the heat of the summer isn't just as delightful as the biting cold of our winters. Hello again, Brentwood Community, I hope everyone is well. The increase in COVID-19 cases has everyone on high alert again, but be assured we are still taking universal precautions.

I received an email regarding an incident at our Shell station on Manchester, and I was asked to share it. An elderly gentleman was checking out and paying for his purchase when he noticed someone standing in line with him had taken a photo of his credit card. Luckily, the gentleman suffered no loss, and was able to change cards. Please continue to be vigilant when you are out shopping and keep a close eye on your personal information and documents.

As many or most of you already know, the St. Louis region has been plagued with an increase in vehicle crimes over the last several years. These crimes primarily include auto thefts and thefts from autos, but can also include violent crime such as armed carjackings. In fact, we see a great many of these criminals are armed even when committing "non-violent" crimes.

This uptick in crime is not exclusive to Brentwood or St. Louis County by any means. It is common in St. Charles County, Jefferson County, and parts of Illinois just over the river. The overwhelming majority of the thefts from autos and stolen autos here in Brentwood have targeted unlocked vehicles with valuables or

keys inside. The official position of Brentwood Police is that residents and visitors should ALWAYS lock their vehicles, ALWAYS store valuables out of sight, and NEVER keep firearms or extra vehicle keys inside of your vehicle, whether it is locked or not.

We have also noticed an increase in garage door opener thefts from vehicles, often in the middle of the night, while the vehicle is in a resident's driveway. This is obviously concerning because it suggests these individuals may attempt to gain access to attached garages while unsuspecting residents are asleep. We STRONGLY encourage you to keep your garage door openers with you, as you would your keys or firearm, especially if you do not park in a secured garage. Also, please ensure you routinely lock the door from your garage to your home. I do this religiously (or, as my fiancé calls it – obsessively) each evening before bed.

Another tip I received was actually from my parents (proud kid moment ☺ ) who told me if you store your vehicle keys in a metal container within your home, criminals are not able to access vehicle fob codes to steal or enter your vehicles.

As some of you read this, you may think this is overkill, but if locking your doors and securing your homes prevents the success of armed criminals, I'd say it's a win for everyone. As always, stay safe and call us anytime. ★

**July 30, 2021**