

Please take a little time to read the Winter Safety advice below from the Volunteers & Neighbourhood Watch Liaison Officer, West Kent Police

Stay with Your Vehicle

It's fairly common for people to warm up their vehicle in front of their homes during the winter months. But be careful! If you warm up your vehicle unattended, a passing auto thief may just hop in and steal it. To prevent this, stay with your vehicle when you're warming it up. Don't give anyone an opportunity to take advantage of your absence. In addition, never leave your vehicle running in your garage with the garage door closed! Having the engine running in a closed area can cause carbon monoxide poisoning. [Try to avoid running the engine anyway to reduce engine emissions!]

Lock Your Doors

Lock all the doors of your vehicle and home, including the garage door. Any opening is an invitation for crime. Thieves can infiltrate your garage and break into your car, or even worse, your home. You should make sure all entrances and exits are secure at all times (this includes windows!).

Keep Valuables with You

Whether you're out shopping or in the comfort of your home, never leave your valuables out of your sight. One common mistake people make is leaving their valuables in their car, only to find that their car has been broken into. Keep your valuables in a safe, if you own one, and make sure to hide it in a place no one would think to look. If you're out shopping, keep your wallet in your front pocket and your purse in front of you.

Stay in the Light

Many people take advantage of the darkness to perform their crimes. Staying in visible areas is one key to winter crime prevention. When in your home, make sure your outdoor lamps are lit at night, if you have them. When outdoors, try to stay in well-lit areas. You should never walk alone at night! People always take advantage of loners, and the cover of darkness makes it much easier.

Be Aware of Your Surroundings

Thieves and other crime-doers take advantage of people who seem distracted. Nowadays, many people use their mobile phones when they should be paying attention to their environment. Don't use your mobile phone too often, and appear confident in where you are going. There is a lesser likelihood that a predator will go after you if you appear confident and aware of your surroundings.

Leave a light on!

If you are going out for the night make sure your house is well lit! Burglars will try to identify houses that look empty – if all your lights are switched off it will look as though no one is home, setting up the perfect opportunity for crime. You could use a timer switch to turn the lights on when you are out. Fake/simulated TV units can give the impression that someone is in when your home is empty (never leave your actual TV on). Do not leave items of value on show through ground floor windows e.g. laptops, tablets, car keys and games consoles etc. Everyone at home should get into the habit of locking the door, even when they are at home. Remove the keys from the lock and keep them out of reach/view but know where they are in case of an emergency.