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Lock it up, police say

As spring arrives and the last of the snow disappears, so too are an increasing number of valuables from vehicles around town.

It seems to happen every year, said Det. Sgt. Murray Drinkwalter of Halton Regional Police. The nice weather arrives after a long winter and thieves take it as a free-for-all, swiping whatever they can from usually unlocked vehicles.

"They (thieves) walk around in the nice weather, looking in cars, trying doors," Drinkwalter said.

His message this spring: Lock your vehicle doors and hide or remove any valuables.

"Theft from autos, as we all know, is a crime of opportunity and if you remove the opportunity, the chance of a person being victimized is reduced greatly," he said.

From January 1 to Tuesday, half of all these thefts involved vehicles with unlocked doors, Drinkwalter said. In another 21 per cent of incidents, the owners weren't sure if they had locked their doors.

It's important that motorists not leave property that could be enticing inside their vehicles overnight or even just while parked outside a store, he said. Take it inside, or if you're shopping, put it in the trunk.

He recommends residents leave their front lights on all night; better-lit driveways seem to be hit less frequently. Also a good idea is to install a bright light near the driveway that works with a motion sensor.

It's not just valuable items thieves steal, Drinkwalter said. He often sees coins, CDs and other seemingly insignificant things taken. The most alluring items seem to be GPS devices, cell phones, laptop computers, iPods and wallets for cash, cards and identification.

The break-ins happen all over town, regardless of a neighbourhood's affluence, Drinkwalter said. He added there's been a slight increase lately in break-ins of vehicles parked in the Maple Avenue shopping/cinema area.

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