Developing Response Strategies For Parking Lot Crime

The following are strategies that can be used for common car crime scenarios. Do not forget that situations vary and that yours may require a tailored response. In addition, be prepared for potential implementation challenges, such as unanticipated costs and delays in both the implementation and impact of your crime prevention strategy.

It's important to measure your car crime problem

Doing so will tell you whether the response you selected is effective. Proof of effectively reducing car crime (or any other crime) can be useful in persuading other area businesses to join collaborative efforts to reduce crime throughout the community. Your measurement may also provide evidence that the strategy is not reducing car crime as you expected, suggesting an adjustment to the response is in order.
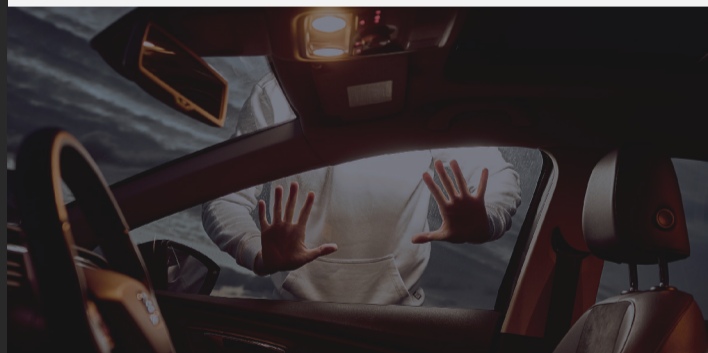
While you may note improvements immediately, it is advisable to wait at least a few months after implementing a response to see whether it has had an impact.

The table below highlights ways that you can measure the state of your car crime problem, outcomes that will indicate whether the car crime problem has improved, and possible data sources.

Measuring the Outcomes

When measuring outcomes it is important to note that a temporary increase in reporting of incidents to police may represent a positive outcome, indicating that community members are paying greater attention to car crime.

However, reported incidents should decline over time as the number of car crime incidents decrease.

Measurement	Data Source	Strategic Response	Outcome
General Car Crimes			
• Location of incidents • Number of repeat offenders • Perception of safety among parking lot users	• Local police • Business records • Survey of customers	• Restrict pedestrian traffic through parking facility • Install video surveillance throughout parking facility • Keep parking facility clean and well maintained • Improve surveillance by keeping shrubs and trees well manicured • If thefts occur during hours of darkness, install or improve lighting	• Fewer repeat offenders • Less concentrated incidents • Improved feeling of safety • Increased sales volume
Theft of Cars			
• Number of reported incidents • Day/time of incidents • Number of cars recovered • Make and model year of stolen vehicles • Number of complaints • Value of loss or damage ($)	• Local police • Business records	• Reduce number of entrance/exit points • Install entrance/exit barriers • Require use of ticket for exit even if no parking fee is charged • If thefts occur after business hours, restrict parking after those hours • If thefts occur during hours of darkness, improve lighting in and around the parking facility • Promote use of steering column locks, kill switches, brake pedal locks, or other security devices to your employees • Hire a parking attendant or security guard to patrol the facility • Introduce bike patrols to patrol facility	• Fewer reported incidents • Fewer incidents during business hours • Increased recovery rate • Fewer complaints • Decreased value of loss/damage
Theft from Cars			
• Number of reported incidents • Day/time of incidents • Value of loss or damage ($) • Types of items stolen • Number of complaints	• Local police • Business records	• Post signs to encourage drivers to protect themselves, • Post warning signs to deter potential perpetrators • If thefts occur after business hours, restrict parking after those hours • If thefts occur during hours of darkness, improve lighting in and around the parking facility • Secure perimeter with fencing that allows for surveillance • Hire parking attendant or security guard to patrol facility • Introduce bike patrols to patrol facility	• Fewer reported incidents • Fewer incidents during business hours • Decreased value of loss/damage • Fewer complaints

Increased in reports of theft of and from cars

Springville Mall Security Officer

There was an increase in reports of theft of and from cars over several months in 2004 and 2005. Before developing a strategy to address car crimes, the security manager wanted more information about the Mall's problem.

Since the Springville Police Department is called for every car crime reported to Springville Mall Security, the security manager enlisted the police department's crime analyst to look at patterns of thefts of and from cars.

They reviewed each incident for a 12-month period and graphed the average number of crimes reported by day of the week (see right).

From the analysis

it was obvious that Saturdays and Sundays were most problematic for both types of car crimes. Knowing that busier retail days were associated with a greater number of cars at the mall and a higher number of car crimes, the Springville Mall Security responded by controlling access to the facilities around the clock.

They installed entrance and exit gates that required tickets, although customers were not charged a parking fee. The number of security guard patrols also increased throughout the parking lot during the weekends.

Springville Mall Car Crime Trends by Day of the Week

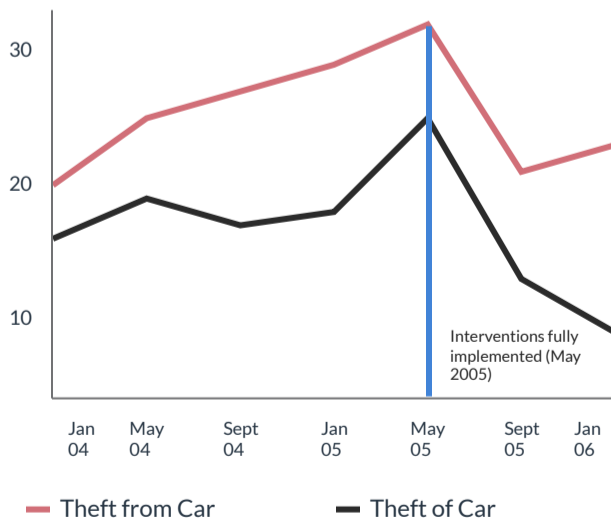

Theft from Car ■ Theft of Car ■
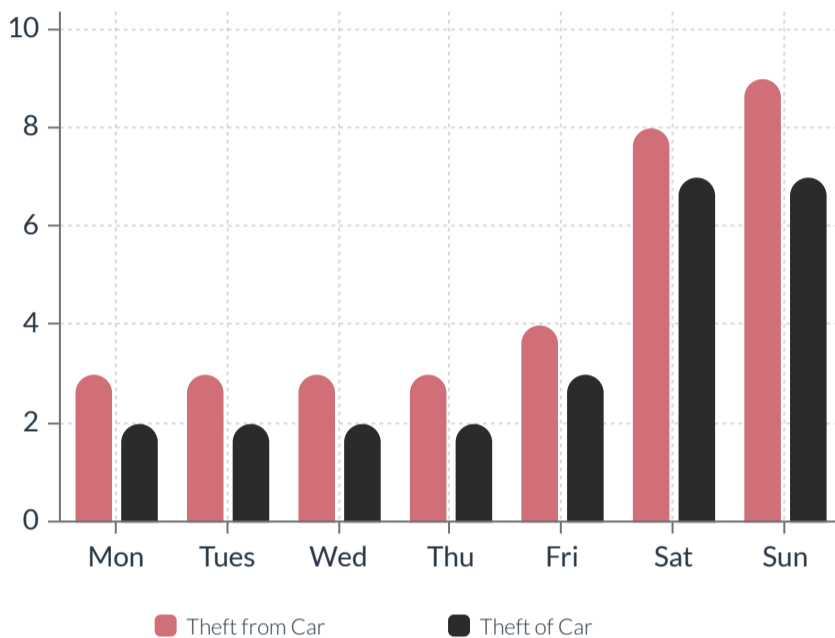
The Outcome

After several months, the Springville Mall security manager and the police department's crime analyst assessed the number of reported incidents at the mall for a year before and seven months after the interventions were in place (see chart to left).

While there was a noticeable decline in car crime after the interventions were fully implemented, theft of cars experienced a greater and more sustained decline than thefts from cars.

This indicates that the interventions may be less successful in preventing theft from cars, and that additional prevention strategies should be considered.

Springville Mall Car Crime Trends Over Time

Interventions fully implemented (May 2005)

Jan 04 May 04 Sept 04 Jan 05 May 05 Sept 05 Jan 06

— Theft from Car   — Theft of Car

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