



For Immediate Release
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CRIMINALS TARGETING CHURCH'S

Harrisonburg, VA – The Harrisonburg Police Department is asking for the community's help with information related to a string of vehicle break-ins. The offender is targeting vehicles in church parking lots while the victim is attending a service. There have been three documented incidents of church parking lot break-ins throughout the city in the past 10 days.

The suspects have either forced entry into vehicles by breaking a window or in some cases, the vehicle was left unlocked. The thieves have taken various items, including electronic devices, purses, cash and prescription drugs. Police believe the suspects may live in the areas of the thefts and possibly are involved in all of the offenses.

Alert citizens are the eyes of their neighborhoods. Officials are asking anyone who may have observed suspicious activity in the area of church parking lots or have been approached by someone selling items that may be related to these offenses to contact the police.

Here are some general safety tips to remember in order to help keep from becoming a victim:

- **Lock your car.** Yes it seems obvious, but it still needs to be mentioned. No matter how little time you will be away from your car, ALWAYS LOCK your car! Almost a quarter of thefts from vehicles involve unlocked vehicles. That's 25 percent more than should happen.
- **Remove valuables.** This tip is just as obvious, yet many people are guilty of leaving valuables in plain sight. It's a fact that most thefts from vehicles are crimes of opportunity. For the most part, people try to break into people's property when there is reason to believe they will be rewarded for their risk. Keeping your belongings safe is as simple as hiding them when leaving your car in public.



- **Find lighting.** Park in well-lit areas and avoid parking between two vehicles that are larger than yours. If you put your vehicle in a secluded area that provides great cover for a thief, it makes it an easy target.

Common sense and instincts prevail, and prevention is the best key. If something seems wrong, or you see someone suspicious in a parking lot, don't leave your vehicle there. Also, notify security and/or the police immediately.

HPD encourages anyone in the community who observes suspicious or criminal activity to report it by calling 911. Callers who have information about crimes and wish to remain anonymous may call Crime Solvers at 540-574-5050. Tipsters may also text "HPD" plus their tip to CRIMES (274637).