CARJACKING

Imagine having someone walk up to you while you are sitting in your car obeying a traffic signal, thrusting a weapon in your face and taking your car from you; or having your vehicle stolen while you are parked in your driveway or your favorite shopping center. This crime is called "carjacking."

WHY IS CARJACKING ON THE INCREASE?

Although statistics are not readily available, carjacking has every appearance of becoming the growth crime of the 90s. Car thieves find it much easier to steal a car while the owner is there, with the keys in the ignition, than it is to break into a locked car, especially if the care is alarmed. Some stolen cars are cut up for parts, others are stolen to be exported and sold, many are stolen simply because the thief wants to take a joyride.

IF YOU ARE CONFRONTED, DO NOT RESIST. YOUR SAFETY IS WORTH MORE THAN A CAR.

- Never leave your car unattended when the keys are in the ignition or when it is running.

- Be observant of your surroundings when driving. Use your rear and side view mirrors.

- Drive in the center lane to make it harder for would-be carjackers to approach the car.

- Be wary of people asking for directions or handing out fliers.

WHEN YOU ARE MOST AT RISK

Carjackings have taken place everywhere from bustling city streets to private drive-ways. It can happen anywhere, not just in "high crime" areas. It is just as likely to occur in daylight as it is after dark. Some of the most at-risk areas are:

- **PARKING LOTS** - Shopping centers, fast food establishments, rest stops and conven-ience store parking lots are the common sites. They are usually close to major high-ways and patrons may have to park in re-mote areas.

- **RED LIGHTS AND STOP SIGNS** - Drivers are often distracted at these loca-tions and are less likely to be aware of their immediate surroundings.

- **PARKING GARAGES** - Carjackers can eas-ily hide between cars or behind other obsta-cles and surprise their victims.

- **FREEWAY RAMPS** - Slowing down or stop-ping before merging with traffic on a busy freeway or when exiting the ramps can pro-vide opportunities for carjackers.

- **GAS STATIONS** - Self-service gas stations are risky because the driver stands outside of the car to pump gas.

ANYBODY CAN BE A TARGET

While most carjackers look for sleek, powerful, luxury automobiles to steal, others go after any easy target of opportunity, sometimes stealing on impulse. While there is no guar-anteed way to avoid being a victim, there are some precautions you can take to reduce your risks.

BEFORE YOU ENTER YOUR CAR

- Be alert to any activity near your car. Pay particular attention to your sur-roundings.

- When approaching your car, have you keys in your hand, and check around and inside the car before entering.

- If there is someone loitering near your car, keep walking and notify law enforcement or security personnel.

- Make a record of your tag number and VIN on a card and keep them with your driver's license and a duplicate copy in your residence. Law enforcement officers need this information to help them find a stolen car.

ONCE YOU ARE IN YOUR VEHICLE

- Keep the doors and windows locked. Purses and valuables should be stored out of sight.

- When stopping in traffic, leave enough distance between your car and thy one in front of you to allow you to maneuver away quickly. A good rule is to be sure that you can see where the rear tires of the car in front of you touch the ground.

- If a suspicious looking person ap-proaches your car, honk the horn or carefully drive away, even if you must go safely through a traffic light.

- If you are driving home and there is someone you do not recognize walking down the street in front of your residence, drive around the block and come back after they have walked away.

- If another car bumps your car or you have a flat tire, keep the doors and windows closed. Wait for the police to arrive or drive slowly to the nearest safe place.

- Be alert to suspicious vehicles or persons in the surrounding areas when using automated teller machines or drive-up windows.