KERN COUNTY ELDER NEWS

Monthly Information Article | Kern County DEAR/EDRT TEAM*
*(Dependent/Elder Abuse Review) Team/EDRT (Elder Death Review Team)

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DON'T BECOME A VICTIM OF CARJACKING

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Carjacking

The world is a very rapidly changing place. Sometimes people from previous generations are extremely trusting, especially seniors. That's a nice place to be, unfortunately it is not reality in today's ever-changing world. Criminals regularly take advantage of trusting and vulnerable people such as seniors and disabled people.

In recent months, the Kern County District Attorney's Office has seen several cases involving older victims who tried to lend a hand and offer a ride to a stranger. These victims found themselves in the middle of a very scary situation, a carjackings.

The term "carjacking" was not even coined until the early 1990's. Some older folks may not even be aware of this relatively new word. Detroit News writers Scott Bowells and EJ Mitchell were looking for an easier way to describe the crime which was previously referred to as ***"robbery armed unlawful driving away and automobile"*** by the acronym of RAUDAA on daily crime reports. Several days later, national broadcast journalist, Ted Koppel used the word "carjacking".

The word "carjacking" is a portmanteau, which describes a way of combing two words – car and hijack.

According to the Department of Justice, nearly 50,000 carjackings occur each year in the United States. Over 90% of carjacking attempts are when there is a lone driver in the vehicle. Some carjack perpetrators will resort to violence and fear to get what they want. Carjackers, as with other criminals look for easy targets such as older adults, physically disabled or other vulnerable individuals.

Methods Used:

- **Vehicle Blocking** – a vehicle or vehicles block you in, perpetrators then jump into action, you have nowhere to go from being blocked in.
- **Good Samaritan** - the perpetrator will appear to need assistance; either appear to be injured or broke down. You offer to help, and they swoop in with

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- Kern Co. DA Victim Services
- Kern Co. Family Law Facilitator
- Kern Co. Public Health
- Kern Regional Center
- Kern Co. Sheriff's Office
- Kern Co. Veterans Service Dept.
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the "accident."

- **Halted Traffic** – stopped traffic has you sandwiched in, the criminal has planned this crime, usually approaching via motorcycle or on foot.

Quick Facts:

- Males make up **90%** of all carjacking perpetrators.
- Over **90%** of carjackings take place in cities as well as suburbs; most occur in metropolitan areas.
- There are nearly **50,000** carjackings annually.
- About **75%** of the time a weapon is used during a carjacking.
- Well over half of carjackings occur within five miles from the victim's home.
- Almost half of carjackings involve firearms, another nearly **30%** involve knives or some other type of weapon.

Tips:

- Immediately lock all doors when entering your vehicle.
- Do not place purse or valuables on the passenger seat.
- Passenger window should always be rolled up.
- Do not stop to assist or pick up strangers.
- Drive in well-lit and familiar streets in the evening hours.
- Park in well-lit places, as close as possible to the business
- Avoid parking near walls, bushes, large trees, or dumpsters.
- Always be ready to enter your car.
- Avoid traveling alone, the Buddy System is always best.
- Don't be distracted, always stay alert:
  - Getting gas
  - Using the ATM
  - At the car wash
  - Loading the unloading packages or young children

When stopped in traffic, allow enough room to move around other vehicles. A good rule of thumb is to make sure you can see the tires of the vehicle in front of you. If an accident occurs in an isolated area, drive to an open business, a fire station, or police station before exiting your car.

Make it a habit to not linger in your car, get in quickly, lock your doors, then start your vehicle and drive to your next location. Be wary of people handing out flyers or selling merchandise in parking lots. Never enter or stay in a vehicle with a carjacker, it could be the last ride you take. Throw your keys or fob and RUN yelling for help. Never hesitate to ask store security to walk you to your vehicle. Always wear your seatbelt and TRUST your instincts.

Insure your vehicle for theft, this reduces the impact financially of having your vehicle stolen or damaged. Be aware of your vehicle's unique identifier known as a VIN (Vehicle Identification Number) as well as your make, model, year, and license plate number.

If you are carjacked…

Of utmost importance, a vehicle is a **THING**, which can be **replaced. *YOU can't be replaced.*** Give up your vehicle and get out of the way. **Immediately call 9-1-1** to report you have been carjacked. If possible, give directions of the suspect's travel and a description as well as the make, model, color, and year of your vehicle. **Stay aware, stay safe!!!**

Sources

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