



## LANCASTER CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT

# NEWS RELEASE

City of Lancaster  
Bureau of Police, 39 West Chestnut Street, Lancaster, Pa. 17603  
[www.lancasterpolice.com](http://www.lancasterpolice.com)

Author: LCPD Auto Theft Unit

Contact Number: (717) 735-3300

Date: January 2012

### Unlocked vehicles and vehicle thefts

The Lancaster Bureau of Police are reminding citizens that it is illegal to start one's vehicle and leave the vehicle unattended for the purpose of warming up the vehicle or defrosting the windshield. Frequently, drivers have also been leaving their vehicles running in convenient store parking lots. In the past, these types of scenarios have resulted in vehicles being stolen.

It is important to understand that the reason for the below listed laws is to prevent vehicle thefts. Vehicle thefts are a significant danger to the public for a number of reasons.

In an effort to curtail these opportunities for a potential auto thief, the Lancaster Auto Theft Unit will be conducting several details in order to identify the below ordinance violators. Violators are subject to having the keys lifted from their vehicles. If the vehicle owner is not located and the keys have to be lifted, the owner will be required to respond to the Lancaster City Police Station for the retrieval of his/her keys. A fine could be applicable.

Residents of Lancaster City are reminded that Lancaster City Ordinance prohibits this practice:

#### § 285-105. Leaving key in lock.

The owner or person in charge of any motor vehicle shall not permit it to stand unattended on any street, private driveway, public or private parking lot, used or new car sales lot or any other unattended open space which is readily accessible to any person without having locked the ignition of such motor vehicle and removed the ignition key from its lock

In addition, the Ordinance authorizes the Police Officer to seize the keys to the vehicle and requires the owner to retrieve the keys at the Lancaster City Police Station, 39 W. Chestnut St., Lancaster, PA.

#### § 285-106. Removal of key by police officer; notice of violation.

Any police officer of the City who finds a motor vehicle left in the condition set forth in § 285-105 may immediately lock such vehicle's ignition, remove the key from the lock and deliver it to the officer in charge at the Police Station in the Public Safety Building. The police officer shall leave a notice of any violation found in a conspicuous place on such vehicle, which notice shall also state where the ignition key has been taken and held.



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In addition, the Pennsylvania Vehicle Code (Title 75) also prohibits the practice of leaving the car unattended:

(Sec 3701) Unattended motor vehicle.

No person driving or in charge of a motor vehicle shall permit the vehicle to stand unattended without placing the gear shift lever in a position which under the circumstances impedes the movement of the vehicle, stopping the engine, locking the ignition in vehicles so equipped, removing the key from the ignition and, when standing upon any grade, turning the front wheels to the curb or side of the highway and effectively setting the brake.

The Lancaster Bureau of Police, Uniformed Patrol Division and Lancaster Bureau of Police Auto Theft Unit intend to increase enforcement and awareness of the above violations. It is the intention of the Lancaster Bureau of Police to minimize the opportunity for vehicle theft suspects to steal cars and create a danger to our community.

Remote starter devices that disable the vehicle if an attempt to move the vehicle without the key in the ignition are the only exemption to this enforcement.

Some anti-theft tips:

1. Always lock your vehicle no matter how short a period of time you intend to be away from the vehicle.
2. Never leave your keys in the vehicle, even using "hidden" locations. Thieves are well aware of hidden boxes and check those areas for keys.
3. Never leave your vehicle running unattended, even with the doors locked. Suspects can, and have broken windows to gain entry.
4. Never leave valuables, electronics, purses, or wallets in plain view within your vehicle. Often suspects that are breaking into vehicles to steal these items happen across keys left in the vehicle and steal the vehicle.
5. Remove all "valet keys" or other spare keys from the glove box that were included with your vehicle.

Anyone with information on people responsible for the theft of vehicles or Theft from Vehicles is encouraged to



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call the Lancaster City Police Auto Theft Unit. Callers may remain anonymous  
717 735-3300.

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