

Winter-Related Crime Trends and Weather Ordinances

by, Sergeant Mike Huddle



We are well into our highly anticipated (or tolerated) Minnesota winter. And, with the changing of seasons, we learn to adapt our behaviors. We've ditched our LuluLemon shorts and flip flops in favor of Carhartt jackets and moon boots— it's what we do. It would be unwise and unsafe (and painfully unfashionable) if we didn't. And in addition to our clothing choices, we adapt in other ways. For example, you may choose to warm up your vehicle on a cold winter day. While doing this, we hope you're staying with (or inside of) your vehicle. Using a remote start would also be ideal (and fancy). Yet, if you choose to leave your vehicle unattended with its engine running, you're risking the possibility of your car becoming stolen. It is important to always remain with your vehicle while it warms to help deter would-be thieves seeking an easy opportunity. Just think about how inconvenient it is to process an insurance claim, file a police report, and walk to your destination in the freezing cold? Although preventable, we see these types of thefts occurring every winter.

Lock the ignition and remove the key: City ordinance 70.6

Did you know that leaving your vehicle running unattended with the key in the ignition is against St. Anthony City ordinance? City Ordinance 70.06 requires that *“every person parking a motor vehicle in an unattended parking area or on a public street or alley shall lock the ignition and remove the key.”* Quickly running into the gas station/store to pick up an item while leaving your vehicle running unattended is risky. It takes a thief a few seconds to jump into your vehicle and drive off— seconds. It may seem easy and convenient in the winter to leave your car running for your quick return; but is it worth the potential risk of having it stolen? And there's also that long cold walk home or to work...so cold.

Winter parking prohibitions during snow events: City ordinance 72.36

It's probably also a good time to remind everyone about winter parking prohibitions during snow events (in Minnesota, it is always an event...never a dull moment). Our Public Works crew clears snow from City streets to allow for safe passage of traffic and access to emergency vehicles. You're part of the solution when you move your vehicle off the street and park in a driveway or open parking lot. This allows for a quick clearing of snow on roadways. City ordinance 72.36 prohibits parking a vehicle on any city street for a period of 48 hours, *“commencing immediately after 2 inches of snowfall, or until snow removal has been completed curb to curb.”* Please share this information with your guests and visitors so they can avoid being ticketed or having their vehicles plowed around.

A majority of thefts reported to the Police Department are due to unlocked vehicles. As always, please keep your vehicles locked and remove any valuables (including remote garage door openers) to help deter theft. You are more susceptible to additional crimes if your keys, garage door opener, and/or personal information happen to be stolen from your car.

Most of these measures are common sense and easy to implement. Take simple steps to adapt your behaviors this winter to protect yourself, your family, and your property. Winter already provides us with enough to contend with. Stay vigilant, stay safe, and stay warm.

If you'd like more crime information, prevention tips, reports, or have questions, please contact the St. Anthony Police Department at 612-782-3350. You can also follow us on the City website, Facebook and Twitter for alerts, news and updates. If you need to report a crime or suspicious activity, please call 911. ■