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Warming up your vehicle while you go back inside your home could cost you.

Burleson police officers have seen an upsurge in the number of people who are starting their cars, then leaving the vehicles unattended. That's just what a potential car thief is looking for – an unattended car with the keys in the ignition. Owners could lose the valuables left unsecured inside the vehicle, or the car itself.

The Transportation Code says that you may not leave a vehicle unattended without stopping the engine, locking the ignition, removing the key from the ignition, and setting the parking brake if the vehicle is on a grade. Violating this section of the Transportation Code is a Class C misdemeanor.

You may be the one shopping this holiday season, but a thief may be the one enjoying the gifts. The police department's community resource officers put together a list of holiday shopping safety tips and distributed those pamphlets at apartment complexes in the city. Those tips include:

- Stay alert and be aware of what is going on around you;
- Take only the items you need (driver's license, one or two credit cards, and minimal cash) and place them in a front pocket, not a back pocket;
- Avoid wearing expensive jewelry;
- If shopping with children, have a plan to meet with store security if your family gets separated;
- Shop in pairs when possible;
- Park in a well-lit place, lock your vehicle, and place anything of value (CD players, car stereos, GPS navigation systems, purses, wallets, cell phones, loose change, tools, iPods, CDs, radar detectors, briefcases/work bags, computers, jewelry, guns and garage door openers) in the trunk;
- Stow your valuables out of sight before you reach your next destination;
- Consolidate multiple bags into one or two larger bags;
- Get your keys in your hand before leaving the store;
- Be aware of anyone approaching you for any reason as you leave the store;
- Ask for a store employee to escort you to your vehicle if you make a large purchase;
- Look into your vehicle as you walk up to it;

- Lock your doors as soon as you get into your vehicle, and:
- Immediately report any suspicious activity to the police department (get a good description of the person, what they are driving and their location before calling 911).

Once you get those holiday gifts home, close your garage door. After the gifts have been unwrapped, don't leave the boxes at the curb until just before 7 a.m. on your trash/curbside recycling collection day. Don't leave valuables in plain sight and don't give a burglar easy access to your home. If you are leaving home for the holidays, fill out a vacation home check form with the police department, put a hold on your mail, and stop all newspaper deliveries. Leave outside lights on and ask a neighbor or friend to check your home daily.