

Temptation - Opportunity and Crime

Overview

Legal doctrine makes a clear distinction between crimes that are “premeditated” and those that happen without significant forethought or planning. In general terms, premeditated crimes (e.g., murder, bank robbery, etc.) are typically:

- More serious and destructive in nature
- Receive more significant punishments
- Occur much less frequently than those that are not as thoroughly planned

Saint Paul police officers observe this same distinction in the behavior of many criminals, particularly those who commit the crimes of theft and burglary. In fact, it is very often true that many crimes of theft and burglary occur because the “potential” criminal is presented with the temptation and opportunity to commit a criminal act. Therefore, if we can remove the temptation and the opportunity, there is a high probability that we can eliminate or drastically reduce the possibility of the crime being committed.

All year long, there are significant numbers of thefts from parked automobiles and open / unsecured garages. These crimes are often motivated by the temptation of seeing objects of value in plain view and the opportunity to take the objects with relatively low risk of being seen and/or apprehended.

What You Can Do

The Saint Paul Police Department suggests that you take the following action(s) to reduce your chance of being a victim of an opportunistic thief:

- Don't leave objects of value in plain view. Consider covering windows in garages. Place valuables in car trunk before you reach your destination (thieves may be watching).
- Lock car doors when you are away. Close garage doors and lock them.
- Provide extra security for particularly vulnerable targets (e.g., bicycles, power tools, etc.) inside the garage.
- Alert police to suspicious people loitering in your neighborhood, in alleys, near cars or garages.
- Record serial numbers of purchased items to aid in their recovery, in the event that they are stolen.

Remember, don't do anything to make it easier for you to be victimized. Don't provide a thief with either temptation or opportunity.