

Tis the season for Christmas car park crooks: AA Insurance

Don't advertise to thieves - remove valuables from your car

Auckland, 20 November 2015 – More Kiwis are locking their cars but thieves are still grabbing the valuables they leave inside, says AA Insurance.

According to a recent AAI Driver Index Survey, which interviewed over 1,000 Kiwi drivers online, more Kiwis are locking their cars than last year, up six per cent to 91 per cent of drivers who always lock their vehicles. But the survey also showed that 41 per cent of Kiwis still leave valuables in their cars.

And thieves take advantage of that. According to AA Insurance's claims statistics for the last 12 months to 30 September, around \$1million was paid out for theft-from-car claims, with the average cost from \$1,000 to \$1,500 per claim. The most commonly stolen items were clothing, makeup and handbags, followed by mobile phones, laptops and iPads.

"Christmas shopping can be stressful enough without drivers returning to find their cars broken into and their belongings stolen," says Amelia Macandrew, Customer Relations Manager, AA Insurance.

"While car park theft happens throughout the year, it can be more heart-breaking around Christmas time when you've spent time and money on gifts for friends and family. People sometimes leave their Christmas shopping in their vehicle while they look for a few more gifts, believing that thieves wouldn't be so brazen as to break into a car in the daytime."

While it's not uncommon for Christmas shopping and groceries to be stolen, travel items are also a target. One family returned home from a road trip, deciding to leave their belongings in the car overnight instead of unpacking them. The car was parked in their driveway, with items hidden or left in the boot. An opportunistic thief smashed a window and took almost \$3,000 worth of clothing, makeup, GHD straighteners and an iPhone.

"It would be nice if people showed more Christmas spirit, but it's often a case of opportunity for thieves who have their own style of Christmas shopping," continues Amelia.

"The items we regularly carry around with us can often add up to hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars," says Amelia. "Work out the cash value of your items, add in what you've spent on Christmas shopping, and ask yourself, if I had that pile of cash in my hand now, would I leave it visible in my car? Chances are you'd carry it with you, or place it somewhere safe. You should do the same with your possessions.

"While insurance will cover the loss to both your car and contents, you don't want the added stress of having your property damaged or stolen, including items that may be sentimental or irreplaceable. So remember to look after you, your family and your belongings, these holidays."

Five festive tips to steer clear of car park break-ins

1. Lock your car, no matter where it's parked and keep your keys with you. Try to park in open, well-lit areas, or an attended, secure parking building.
2. Take valuables (eg wallet, sunglasses, mobile, iPods) with you, don't leave in the glove box or under a seat.
3. If you need to leave items in your car then keep them in the boot where they can't be seen. Don't have them on display.
4. Remove the detachable faceplate of your stereo, GPS cradle and mobile charger.
5. Install additional security to your car such as an alarm, or immobiliser, to help deter thieves.

ENDS

About AA Insurance

AA Insurance Limited is an expert in New Zealand home, contents, and car insurance. Launched in 1994, we're a joint venture between New Zealand Automobile Association and Vero New Zealand, which is part of the Suncorp Group. We employ over 600 staff to look after more than 340,000 customers and 635,000 policies.

We proudly support youth charity Blue Light, and the NRL Telstra Premiership and Holden Cup referees in New Zealand, and have been consistently recognised by: Reader's Digest Most Trusted Brands (since 2011), NZ Direct Insurer Award (since 2012), Kenexa Best Workplaces Survey (since 2008), and Canstar Blue Most Satisfied Customers (since 2011). We've also been recognised among New Zealand's 50 most successful companies in the Rep Z: Corporate Reputation Survey.

AA Insurance has an A+ (Strong) Insurer Financial Strength Rating given by Standard and Poor's (Australia) Pty Ltd. For further information visit www.aainsurance.co.nz.

For more information please contact:

Arwen Vant, Botica Butler Raudon Partners, (09) 303 3862, 021 403 503 or email arwenv@botica.co.nz

Amanda Fifield, AA Insurance Limited, (09) 927 2085 or email Amanda_Fifield@aainsurance.co.nz