



Crimes of Opportunity

Did you know that there are two types of criminals? There is the predatory criminal and there is the opportunist. The predatory criminal is one who targets a person specifically, because you have something specific that they want. For example, maybe you have a rare but expensive car, a coin collection, or some expensive jewelry that was seen and then bragged about to the wrong person. A predatory criminal is an individual who takes the time to rehearse scenarios and form a plan about how they are going to get what they want from you. And, these types of criminals don't just stop because their target's property is hard to get, they will just keep trying until they find a way. Even banks are susceptible to predators, because the fact is, a predator is not easily deterred. Fortunately for us, predators are rare, but opportunist criminals are everywhere. A criminal who is an opportunist may not be looking to commit a crime but will commit one when the opportunity arises. For instance, a car that is parked on the side of the road or in the driveway running; or a garage door that is open, but no one is around tending to either situation. Maybe a purse is sitting open while the owner is facing away, preoccupied with something else. These situations and more are opportunities for crimes. One of the things that we can do to protect ourselves from opportunistic criminals is by making crime prevention a habit. Plainly stated, if a criminal is going to steal from you: **Make. Them. Work for it!** Become a hard target. Don't let bad habits or laziness make you a victim of crime. Crime prevention involves knowing your neighborhood by getting to know your neighbors, it's about putting away and locking up precious items, marking your property and taking precautions that will become everyday habits. Criminals learn from our behavior and they change when we change, so we must always be one step ahead of them. Safeguard your home and vehicles and the items inside. Get educated and stay up to date about what you can do to help keep opportunists at bay.

No one ever leaves a big, red blinking target around their vacant home or car thinking this would be a good day to be burglarized, but by putting those pictures out on Facebook from your current vacation place saying, "Wish you were here!" ...that's exactly what you are doing. Check in with family or friends with other non-social media forms to say that you are doing well, but leave the picture posting and excitement from your travels for when you come back.

Check and re-check your car to make sure that windows are rolled up, doors are locked and that NOTHING is in view in your car, that means NOTHING. What you consider to not be worth anything can be worth something to someone else, so even leaving spare change in your car can be a tantalizing draw to an opportunist.

Opportunist criminals can get pretty bold when they see something sitting right out in the open and think no one is watching. For example, package thieves, also known as Porch Pirates, are almost as daring as anyone can get. They walk or drive down the street, see your package and

make the bold move of running up to your porch at any time of the day and run off with the delivery. With most packages being dropped off and stolen from front porches, it may be best to consider other options such as, asking a friend, relative or neighbor to have the package delivered to their address if they are available to take and sign for it. Other considerations are to have the item shipped to your place of work (if permitted), or ask the delivering company to delay the package or look into other services the company may offer for a fee or for free to make sure that your package can get to you safely.

Remember that opportunist are everywhere, so do what you can to secure your property while you are away from, or in and around your home. One of the most important things that you can understand is that crime prevention is everybody's business, and that crime prevention starts with you.