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Vancouver's Safer Parking Initiative Cuts Vehicle Crime by Nearly Half
Parking lot safety initiative expands with 28 new officers and civilian police coordinators from BC and Alberta

VANCOUVER (May 27, 2011) – The Safer Parking Initiative today announced the graduation of 28 newly trained officers and civilian police coordinators from various jurisdictions in the Lower Mainland including Vancouver, North Vancouver, Burnaby, Richmond, Delta, Port Coquitlam, Coquitlam, Langley, South Coast B.C. Transportation Authority Police Services, Transit Security, and Calgary. Since its inception, the Initiative, spearheaded by the Vancouver Police Department and Canadian Direct Insurance, has reduced crime by an average of 47% in awarded Vancouver parkades, with many facilities reporting zero-crime occurrences.

“The Initiative’s success in reducing crime is a key factor in the demand to expand it in Vancouver and bring it to other jurisdictions outside of the downtown Vancouver core where it was initiated over 3 years ago,” according to Doug LePard, Deputy Chief at Vancouver Police Department.

The Safer Parking Initiative embodies cooperative measures to maximize vehicle security in downtown parking lots, by creating a set of safety guidelines and measures such as improved lighting, security patrols, signage and surveillance to ward off thieves and discourage disorderly behavior. The Safer Parking Initiative builds on the experience and success of the Safer Parking Scheme, an initiative of the U.K. Association of Chief Police Officers. Over a period of 14 years, the UK scheme has significantly reduced crime levels in participating parking facilities – and even in the neighborhoods near them. The UK program now boasts 4700 lots across the UK.

“With just one Vancouver Police Officer trained on the principles of the Safer Parking, we were able to grow Safer Parking from 5 to 33 lots in Vancouver in just 3 years and contribute to a significant reduction in crime. Just imagine the impact we can make with more trained officers,” says Colin Brown, Chief Operating Officer of Canadian Direct Insurance, whose organization helped bring the Initiative to Vancouver, and has an interest in reducing theft from autos and in improving public safety.

The training was conducted by Kelvin Reynolds, Head of the Safer Parking Scheme in Britain, and included officers from across the Lower Mainland and Calgary.

“Fear of crime or anti-social behaviour is a key factor for motorists when deciding where to park,” said Reynolds. At today’s graduation ceremony, Reynolds explained how the Vancouver program works: “To be a member of the Safer Parking Initiative, parking lot operators must put in place measures that help to deter criminal activity and anti-social behaviour, thereby doing everything they can to prevent crime and reduce the fear of crime in their parking area. Best standards for security include everything from lighting and colour schemes to security patrols and surveillance devices.”

To help members of the public improve their personal safety when parking downtown, Canadian Direct Insurance released a list of Top 10 Safety Tips for drivers. They include:



- being alert when approaching your vehicle in a parking lot;
- using an anti-theft device and vehicle immobilizer;
- keeping the interior of your car clean; and,
- removing any valuables from your vehicle.

A complete copy of the Top 10 Safety Tips is posted on the Canadian Direct Insurance website, www.canadiandirect.com.

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Canadian Direct Insurance Tips for Safe Parking

1. When you select a place to park, choose a space that appears to be in a safe and well-lit location. Take a look at the surrounding environment and imagine what it will look like when you return to your car later. If you believe it will be dark, unsafe or if you will feel uncomfortable, do not park there.
2. Don't advertise the brand of your car alarm or stereo equipment by placing a sticker on the outside of your vehicle. This makes it easier for thieves to target your car or stereo.
3. Use a good anti-theft device.
 - a. Get a two-way car alarm. Most audible alarms have similar switch-off mechanisms and do not deter thieves. Two-way alarms are often silent, with an alert sent to the owner to enable them to call police if their vehicle is broken into. The ability to apprehend thieves is therefore increased -- a thief will spend more time in a vehicle if he/she is unaware that an alarm has gone off, and is more likely to get caught.
 - b. Get a vehicle immobilizer in order to prevent a thief from starting or moving your car.
4. Keep all valuables hidden, or better yet, don't keep valuables in your vehicle. Thieves don't discriminate between old and new cars or the value of the goods visible. They are often robbing several cars in a day. Collecting small change and goods (even pop cans) will be a temptation for thieves.
5. Keep your car clean. Thieves expect that messy or dirty cars have careless owners who may have left valuables in the car, or haven't properly secured their vehicle.
6. If you see any suspicious activity near a vehicle, do not approach the vehicle. Notify a security guard or police immediately.
7. Use extra caution during sporting events or concerts. These are prime times for thefts in parking lots.
8. Be alert and confident when going to and from your car. Be aware of your surroundings. As you are leaving your car parked, take a look in the windows to ensure you have no valuables inside.
9. Lock your doors and keep your windows rolled up when you get into your vehicle and until you exit a parking lot.
10. If you need to keep any valuables in your vehicle, engrave your license number on any items of value.



Qualities of Safe Parking Lots

1. **Visibility:** Safe lots have plenty of open space to deter anti-social behavior.
2. **Graffiti & Cleanliness:** Clean lots appear to be well managed & secure, deterring thieves.
3. **Exit points:** Well-lit public entry & exit points make it difficult for criminals to make a discrete getaway.
4. **Active Security:** There should be an alert security attendant on the lot at all times.
5. **Lighting:** Bright lighting deters anti-social behavior and criminal activity.
6. **Active Management:** Good lots plan parking rotation, so cars are not scattered and parked alone after peak parking hours.
7. **Surveillance:** Thieves will avoid areas where there are cameras.
8. **Entry points:** Entry should be controlled by lot users only.
9. **Signage:** Rules & safety tips demonstrate active management.
10. **Paint:** White or bright paint will create the illusion of brightness and deter anti-social or criminal behavior.