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Police Chief: Thefts From (and of) Unlocked Vehicles Continues to Follow Pretty Uniform Pattern

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Police Chief Ray Osborne recently responded to questions from Darien Police Commission Chairman J. Paul Johnson about the pattern typically followed by thieves stealing from vehicles Darien drivers leave unlocked outside overnight.

"We've had some success in making arrests," Osborne said. "The Detective Division is working very hard on this latest rash, and we do have some viable leads on that. We'll be following up as best we can."

"Do we have any idea whether this is a kind of planned group that is doing this, or just individuals?" Johnson asked the police chief at a Police Commission meeting last Wednesday.

Osborne responded: "Well, we hve a lot of information on it. [...] These individuals, mostly juveniles, are coming from some of the bigger cities up north. We've had them from Bridgeport, New Haven; we've had them as far away as Hartford and Waterbury; some from Stamford.

"They're, again, mostly in the 16-17 year age range.

"And it's not just Darien. This is a Connecticut-wide, even nationwide thing [...]"

Going out overnight and stealing from unlocked cars, or even the cars themselves when the keys are found inside them, has become popular among a lot of teenagers, Osborne said. "This is kind of the thing now. The new crime [...]"

"It's not just one group or a gang of individuals. It's a lot of different individuals that are doing this."

It takes advantage of a practice that's become popular among drivers, he said: "People kind of get in the habit of leaving the keys in the ashtray, in the cup holder or in various [other] locations in the cars."

Doing that makes it easy to steal the car, he said.

See also:

- [Nine Unlocked Vehicles Entered, One Stolen, on One Night Last Week](#) (July 23)
- [Unlocked SUV Reported Stolen Overnight Friday to Saturday from Phillips Lane Driveway](#) (July 17)
- [Four Vehicles Stolen, Others Entered Around Post Road in Noroton Overnight, Saturday to Sunday](#) (July 9)
- [Unlocked Darien SUV Stolen Overnight, Crashed Before Dawn, Hartford Teen and a Juvenile Arrested \[Updated\]](#) (June 29)
- [Thefts from Unlocked Cars, SUVs Across Town Entered Overnights in Mid-June](#) (June 28)
- [Unlocked Car Entered Overnight on Raymond Street](#) (May 15)

Johnson asked, "On the whole, are these kids under the control of some adult [or] gang, or are they just free agents, from what you've been able to tell?"

Osborne responded: "From what we know, they're not under the control of any adults. They're just out on their own. A lot of times, they're frequent offenders.

"You know since they raised the age of the juvenile [court status in prosecutions] from 15 and under to 17

and under, we've seen an increase, obviously, in juvenile crime [...]

"Not a lot happens to them, unfortunately, when they go down to juvenile court, and they know this. [...] I guess a lot of the funding has been cut from the juvenile court system -- for whatever reason, not a lot happens [in terms of punishment in Juvenile Court]."

He continued: "Not a lot of sanctions are put on these kids." Osborne indicated that part of the reason may be that the thefts are considered just property crimes, not violent crimes.

Johnson asked what happens with the cars.

"Mostly, it's joy-riding situations -- a lot of them," Osborne said. "They're recovered. We've recovered them in Bridgeport. We've recovered them in Waterbury, New Haven.

"Not many of them are damaged -- there just might be some minor damage, junk left behind in the vehicles. But, no, it's not like they're being chopped up at chop shops and being sold for parts. They're mostly being used for joy riding."

Johnson asked how the thieves get to town. "On the train?"

"No, they're coming down with other stolen cars," Osborne replied. "What we're finding is, they get dropped off, and they're going from driveway to driveway."

It's important for town residents to stop leaving cars unlocked, leaving valuables and especially keys in them, Osborn said. "We have to let people know that we need the target hardened here, and kids, these youths, are going to keep coming back unless we make it clear that Darien's not an easy place to hit."