



# Safety Coalition

## August Safety Tip

### **Park Safe!**

### **Take Steps to Keep Your Car, Your Belongings and Yourself Safe in Parking Lots**

**By Andrew Wooten, President of S.A.F.E.**

**Parking lots are full of opportunities for criminals. Here are a few quick tips for parking safely:**

- **Park in well-lit spot, even if it's in the daytime. It may be dark when you return.**
- **Don't park close to a wall or shrubbery. They could provide a hiding place for a criminal.**
- **Don't park next to a paneled van or any vehicle that you can't see into.**

### **When You Park**

**What else can you do to help ensure your safety in parking lots or garages? Look for things that are suspicious or just don't feel right. Trust your inner voice!**

**When you park your car, before you turn off your engine and while your seat belt is still fastened, with your windows rolled up-take five seconds and look around. If something doesn't seem right, move your car.**

**Ready to leave your car? Keep all doors locked until the moment you're ready to exit. That means gathering all the things you are taking with you before you get out. If you need to gather things from the back seat, sit down in your back seat. Do not bend down into your car-this leaves you too vulnerable and you cannot see what is happening around you.**

### **Hide Your Stuff**

**We all carry valuables in our car. If you must leave these things in your car, secure them in your trunk before you reach your destination. Never leave them in clear sight.**

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***Criminals case parking lots and garages, looking for valuables, and for people putting belongings in their trunks. They know that if they break a car window, there's a button they can push that will release the trunk.***

***Don't Linger in the Lot***

***As you walk away from your vehicle, take a few seconds and look back. This is a good time to lock your car again. Look around as you are walking up to your destination, and carry your purse or briefcase on the side farthest from passing traffic. This will keep someone from driving by and grabbing it off your shoulder.***

***As you walk back to your parking place, remember to be alert! Have your keys and your pepper spray in your hand. Turn around as you leave the building and look at where you just left. This gives the perception that you are paying attention to your surroundings and sends the message that the element of surprise will not be available to anyone with bad intentions.***

***Do not unlock the car until you are ready to enter. If possible, only unlock the driver's door unless others are riding with you. Once inside the vehicle, immediately lock your doors and get under way as quickly as possible.***

***In parking lots and garages, as in all outdoor settings, it's crucial to pay attention to your surroundings. Just a few seconds of looking around-but more importantly, paying attention to yourself and your behavior-is the most important thing you can do to ensure your safety.***

***Andrew Wooten is the president of S.A.F.E. (Safety Awareness Firearms Education), and has been in the safety and security industry for the past 24 years. Visit the S.A.F.E. website, [www.justbesafe.com](http://www.justbesafe.com), for more information.***

***If you have a concern or idea please send it to***

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***Cedar Rapids Area Association of Realtors® Safety Coalition***

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