



NATIONAL HIJACK PREVENTION ACADEMY

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HIJACK PREVENTION GUIDELINES:

Introduction:

It has become increasingly difficult to steal motor vehicles, with all the anti-theft devices, such as immobilisers, gear-locks, etc. These steps have resulted in a dramatic increase in vehicle hijackings. The hijacker has the element of surprise and this is a concern. The increasing retrenchment and the high unemployment figures are also factors. This is easy earned money and the already well-established syndicates will buy these vehicles from the hijacker. Vehicle hijacking is an organised business, run according to business principles and based on thorough planning. Specific vehicles with specific characteristics are ordered beforehand and efforts have to be made to meet the requirements of such orders. These vehicles will then be resold to the already predetermined buyer.

The hijacked vehicles that are not sold to buyers in South Africa, will be smuggled out of the country. These vehicles will be sold in our neighbouring countries or trade, exchanged for drugs.

The large number of stolen and unlicensed firearms is also a concern. Most of these firearms are bought or supplied to the robbers by the syndicates. This easy access to firearms make the robbery of a vehicle the easiest crime to commit and by far the quickest way of earning a few thousand rand.

It is obvious that vehicle hijackers are motivated by greed and an insatiable need for more and more comfort, rather than need. An insatiable hunger for power is another theme emerging in robbers. The power-base for the latter is presented by the access to firearms. Possession of a firearm forces everybody to obey or else face the consequences.

Definition:

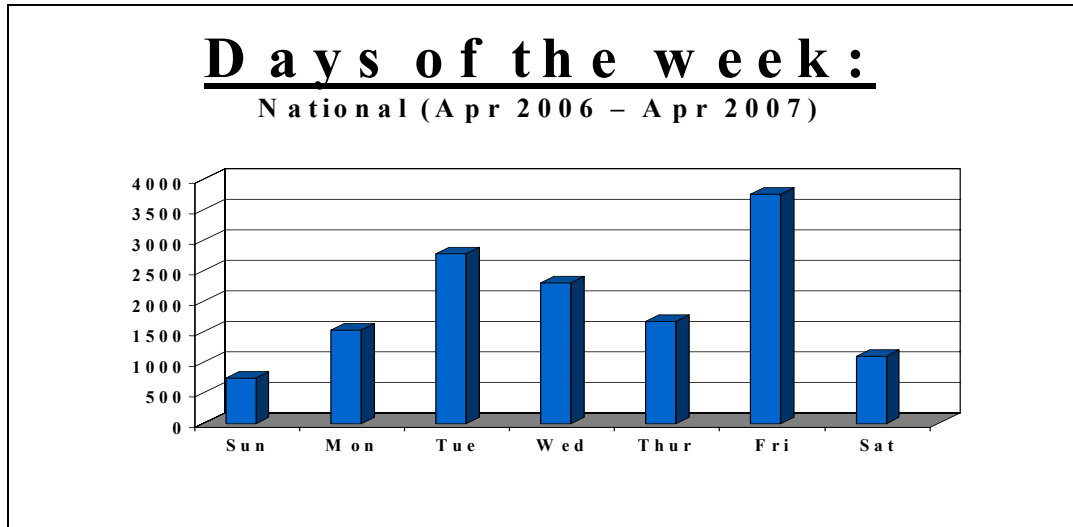
Vehicle hijacking forms one of the sub-categories of armed robbery and does not constitute a different crime from armed robbery. Perpetrators would consequently be charged with “**robbery with aggravating circumstances**” in court, and not with “**vehicle hijacking**”. Robbery with aggravating circumstances can be defined as the unlawful, intentional and violent removal and appropriation of movable corporeal property belonging to another. The victim’s resistance has to be overcome and the property obtained by the use of violence against the victim’s person.

If the victim is first injured by the perpetrator and then dispossessed of property while being physically incapacitated, armed robbery is likewise committed. However, the victim needs not necessarily be physically incapacitated. In the absence of actual physical violence, a threat to commit violence against the victim is sufficient. The threat of violence may be of an express or implied nature. Vehicle hijacking neatly fits the above definition, with the property involved being specifically a motor vehicle of some kind.

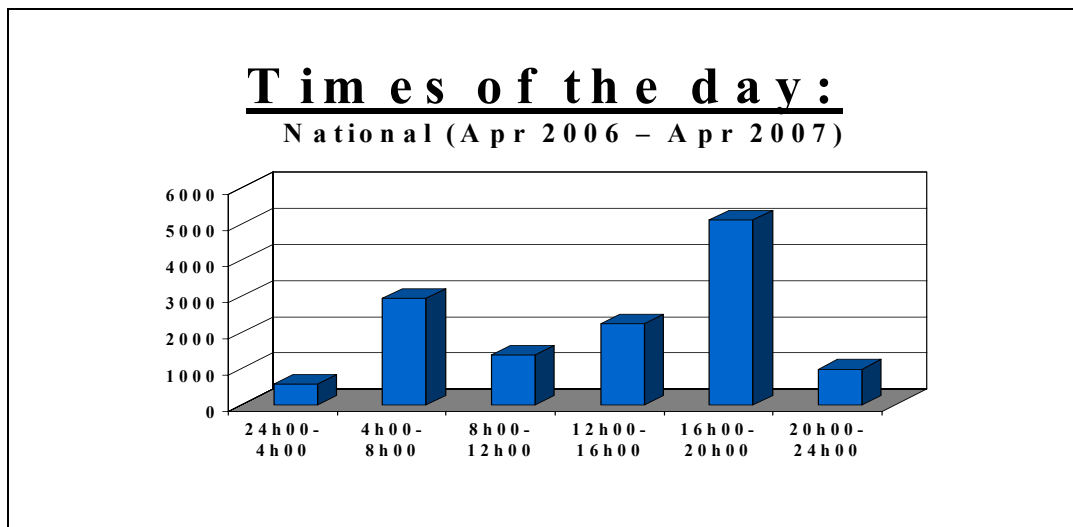


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Days of the week and time of day in which hijackings occurred:



The analysis indicated that hijackings occur every day of the week, **reaching a high on Fridays**, due to motorists being more relaxed and traffic increasing earlier on a Friday. Weekends show a lower hijacking rate due to syndicates checking their stock and placing orders on Mondays as well as the fact that there are fewer vehicles on the road. This also explains why Tuesdays and Wednesdays show more hijackings.



Hijacking of vehicles reached its lowest point at 02h00 in the morning. Hijackings are low during the night and early hours of the morning, and start increasing at 06h00 due to motorists leaving home for work and stabilises throughout the day.

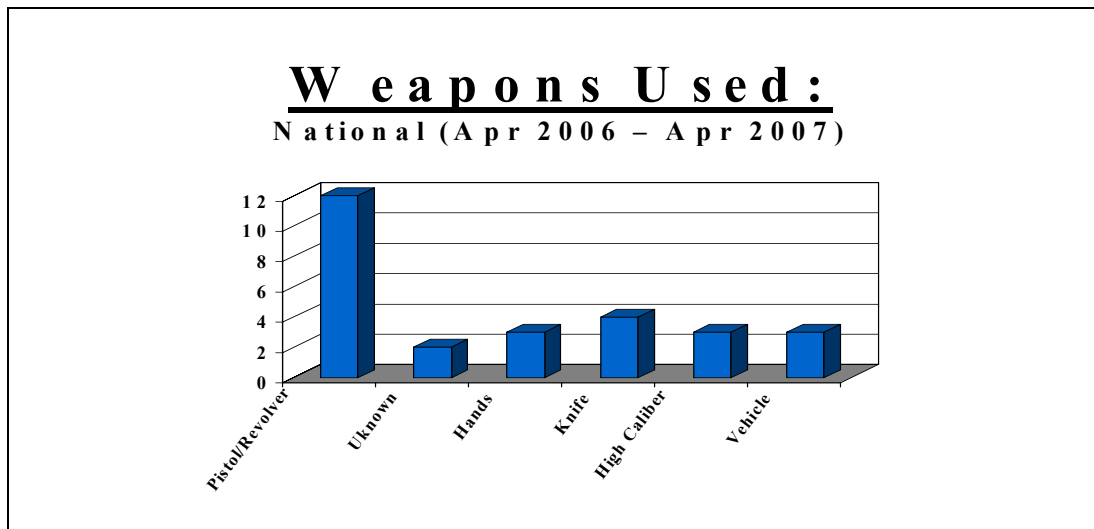


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A **drastic increase** occurred from 17h00 in the afternoon due to motorists heading towards home. Vehicles hijacked during this **peak hour (16h00 – 20h00)** may be explained by the fact that people returning from work are often tired, frustrated and not alert to potentially threatening circumstances. Negligence on behalf of the motorist could also not be excluded, e.g. an idling vehicle is left unattended to open a gate in the driveway. This trend is not new and the motorist will become the prey of hijackers.

Another explanation for this phenomenon is that highways are congested with traffic, which make it almost impossible to catch hijackers involved without air support once they have disappeared into traffic.

Weapons used during hijackings:



As it was earlier indicated, in the majority of vehicle hijackings, firearms were used to commit the crime. Gauteng and Kwa-Zulu Natal reported the highest incidence of vehicle hijacking. The circulation of illegal firearms in South Africa is disturbing and has to have a direct influence on the increase of vehicle hijackings and violent crime in general in South Africa.

The trade in stolen firearms is a lucrative industry in South Africa and the rewards seem to justify the risk of apprehension for the criminals involved. The punishment of crimes does not seem to have a deterrent effect on potential criminals anymore.

The analysis indicates that firearms most used are pistols and revolvers. A very small percentage of vehicle hijackings are committed using knives, hands, high caliber guns and shotguns.

When to Shoot:

It is noticed with great concern that there is general confusion over the issue of the public shooting and killing or wounding another person under differing circumstances. People have a responsibility to protect themselves in a situation where they need to discharge a firearm in the process of self-protection.



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What exactly are the legal requirements of self-defense? The following points are important:

- The attack must be unlawful.
- The attack must be imminent or have commenced.
- The attack must not have been completed. One cannot act on grounds of self-defense for an attack committed an hour earlier.
- The defensive action must be directed against the attacker.
- The defensive action must be proportionate to the circumstances. The value of property involved and the instrument used for attack are important considerations.

The test used by the court to determine the lawfulness of the defensive action is that of a reasonable man. The question to be asked is whether a reasonable man in the same position would have done the same thing.

In all cases where a person is killed, the matter is investigated to establish if anyone was responsible for the death. This is the point when people perceive they are being charged with murder by the police and believe they cannot defend themselves against an unlawful attack without being charged. If your action is within the principles of self-defense, there is nothing to worry about.

Types of hijackings:

Freight Hijacking – A commercial vehicle is hijacked not only to secure the vehicle but also its cargo, which can be of substantial value. Frequently, the cargo is of more interest to the hijacker than the truck.

Transport Hijacking – The vehicle is taken for the express purpose of using it as transport during other crimes such as drug dealing, burglaries, bank robberies and gun running. The vehicles are probably later cannibalised for spare parts or simply dumped.

Showmanship Hijacking – A gang operates out of egotistical bravado, acting on the “this is a cool thing to be doing” rationale. Peer group pressure is very high and individuals may be coerced into more dangerous and daredevil approaches; being labeled a “sissy” if they don’t. Thus intimidation, violence and vandalism are associated with the crime. Drugs and alcohol may also be a motive as theft of the victim’s personal belongings is commonplace.

Operational Hijacking – A group formally work together in a more structured way. They usually have experience in car theft and have established contacts within the motorcar underworld that will receive and pay cash for stolen vehicles or spare parts.

Syndicate Hijacking – The most organised of all and often has international connections. A network of hijacking groups is established with the overall coordinator, syndicating out work so that he remains out of view in exactly the same way as the drug baron uses pushers. This makes identifying and arresting the ultimate boss very difficult. Additionally, a syndicate is often backed by a lot of money, especially if there are international links and makes full use of any potential to bribe the authorities in order to protect their operations.

Modus Operandi used by the hijackers:

- Most hijackings take place in the driveways of residential areas. These hijackers prefer areas with accessible escape routes.
- Hijackings take place while stationed at any traffic sign or intersection.



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- Hijackings take place while stationary next to the road, e.g. to answer cell phone.
- Hijackings also occur at post offices and parking areas or you may be followed leaving the filling station with the objective to hijack your vehicle where it is quiet.
- The hijackers sometimes use a vehicle to force the victim off the road.
- Hijackings take place at schools when dropping off / picking up children.
- Hijackings take place while the vehicle is idling when off-loading / loading passengers.
- Hijackings take place when advertising your vehicle for sale (Test drive method).
- Bogus Police or Traffic Officers also conduct hijackings (Blue light scenario).

HOW TO AVOID A HIJACK SITUATION:

Approaching and entering your driveway:

- **2km from your house strategy.** Be extra alert. Switch off the car radio and concentrate on your surroundings. If you have noticed any vehicle behind you, use the techniques you have learned during the **hijack prevention & survival course** to determine whether you are being followed.
- Remember to stop your vehicle just on the inside of the gate and select reverse whilst waiting for the gate to close. This creates confusion and may buy you a few seconds for the gate to close completely behind you.
- Check your driveway and street before you leave or enter your premises.
- Make sure your driveway is well lit and clear from shrubbery where perpetrators can hide.
- Be aware of unknown pedestrians close to your residential address – do not turn into your driveway – pass and go back later.
- Liaise with your neighbours – know them.
- Be aware of vehicles parked close to your address with occupants inside. It might be perpetrators observing the area.
- Be alert if your animals do not greet you at the gate as usual. It might be that the perpetrators over-powered them.
- Phone your home and ask for someone to make sure your driveway is safe and to open and close the gate for you.
- When returning home after dark, ensure that an outside light is on, or have someone meet you at the gate. Check with your armed response company if they are rendering rendezvous services.
- If at any time you have to open the gate yourself, make sure nobody suspicious around and the road is clear. Stop right in front of your gate. Do not switch off the vehicle, leave the key in the ignition, get out and close the door (not creating temptation). Then open the gate. Drive in and close the gate immediately behind you.
- If you have small children in the vehicle, take the key with you (**this is the only exception**). You need the key as a “negotiating tool”. The perpetrators want your vehicle and you want your children.
- If your children are older, it is advised that they exit the vehicle with you when opening the gate so that you are all separated from the vehicle should an attack occur.

Parking your vehicle:

- Check rear-view mirror to ensure you are not being followed.
- When exiting your vehicle, be cautious and aware of surrounding obstructions and shrubbery that may be concealing a hijacker.
- Never sit in your parked vehicle without being conscious of your surroundings. Sleeping in a stationary vehicle is particularly dangerous.



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- When approaching your driveway, be on the lookout for suspicious vehicles / persons. This is very important as the majority of hijackers approach their victims in home driveways.

Whilst entering your vehicle and while driving, the following should be considered:

- Have your key ready, but not visible.
- Inspect the outside and inside of the vehicle before unlocking. Check underneath your vehicle for items placed under the wheels. Also make sure nobody is hiding on the passenger side before you enter your vehicle. (As explained during the **hijack prevention & survival course**)
- Know your destination and directions to it; and be alert should you get lost.
- Always drive with your windows closed and doors locked.
- Make a mental note of any Police Stations in the vicinity.
- **When stopping behind another vehicle, leave half a vehicle length in front of your vehicle to make an emergency escape if necessary.**
- When dropping off a passenger, make sure they are safely in their own vehicle before departing.
- Avoid driving through high crime or unfamiliar areas.
- Avoid driving late at night / early hours of the morning when the roads are quiet.
- Drive in the center lane away from pedestrians where possible.
- If possible, never drive alone.
- NEVER, EVER pick up hitchhikers or strangers. **(VERY IMPORTANT)**
- Never follow routine routes when driving; change on a regular basis.

Other situations:

- If approached by a stranger while in your vehicle, drive off if possible or use your hooter to attract attention.
- Lock your doors, close your windows and do not have bags or briefcases visible in the vehicle. Use the boot for this. Cell phone should also not be visible.
- There are times and days that these items are visible in the vehicle. Try and open the window they might “smash & grab” about 3 cm, so the window can absorb the sudden impact. If you’ve left your stopping distance you may be able to escape.
- Be constantly on the lookout for suspicious looking characters or vehicles and do not hesitate to report them to the SAPS.
- Always be on the alert for potential danger, and be on the lookout for possible escape routes and safe refuge along the way.
- **When approaching a red traffic light at night, slow down so that you only reach it when it turns green.**
- Do not take anything from people standing at traffic lights or places where they gather (job seekers on gathering points). Perpetrators are usually standing among these people.
- Make sure you are not followed. If you suspect you are being followed, drive to the nearest Police Station or any busy public area.
- If any person or vehicle in a high-risk area arouses your suspicions, treat it as hostile and take appropriate action, e.g. when approaching a red traffic light, slow down, check for oncoming traffic and if clear, drive through the intersection. A fine will be preferable to an attack. Treat stop streets in the same way. Thereafter call for assistance if necessary. Always report these incidents to the SAPS. **But remember, this is not an excuse to ignore the rules of the road. The onus will be on you to prove in a court of law that you had justifiable reason to act the way you did and this is only in the case of a real, life-threatening emergency.**



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- Should a suspicious vehicle in fact be a (unmarked) SAPS vehicle, the Police must identify themselves by:
 - Use of a blue light, loudspeaker or any other police equipment.
 - The flash of a badge through the window whilst driving is not enough.
 - The Police must go all out in order to let the public know who they are.
- Consider the following actions:
 - Switch on emergency lights and put your hand out the window (if possible), indicating that they should follow you. **Your intention must be very clear and understandable.**
 - By exceeding the speed limit, you are sending out a message of suspicion, e.g. stolen / hijacked vehicle, transporting stolen goods, under the influence.
 - Drive to the nearest Police Station or when in doubt, the nearest busy public area.
- Always have your identity document and driver's license in your possession as well as a pen and notebook to take necessary notes.
- If possible, avoid driving in the dark. Hijackers may stage a minor accident, for e.g. If your vehicle is bumped from behind and you do not feel comfortable with the individual involved in the situation, indicate he / she must follow you and drive to the nearest Police Station or any busy public area for help.
- Never open your vehicle window or door for any stranger. If a suspicious person is near your unoccupied vehicle, do not approach the vehicle. Walk to the nearest public area and ask for assistance.
- If you encounter obstacles in the road, e.g. rocks, tyres, do not get out of your vehicle to remove them. Reverse and drive away in the opposite direction.
- Do not stop to eat or rest on deserted roads.
- Do not leave your vehicle unattended at a filling station.
- Cell phones should be carried on the body. Perpetrators will not allow you to remove your cell phone and valuables from the vehicle during an attack.

Information you should know:

If your vehicle is hijacked or stolen, promptly report it to the SAPS. Make sure you have the vehicle details: model, color, vehicle identification and registration numbers available to assist with the recovery of the vehicle.

When forced to drive with a hijacker, be observant without making direct eye contact and try to memorise as many details as possible.

It is important to describe the hijacker as accurately as possible. When observing a hijacker, take note of his head and face – the shape of the eyes, mouth, nose and ears. Take note of possible irregularities. Look at the hair, skin color, complexion and possible scars and tattoos. Observe the build, sex, body movement, clothing and any conversation that may take place.

- Remember the direction from which they came and fled, as well as the time and place the incident happened.
- Remember to make mental and physical notes immediately after the incident to ensure accurate and detailed information for the Police investigation.

Taken hostage - It can be helpful to have a survival plan in the back of your mind should such an incident occur. It is difficult not to become paranoid about being taken hostage. However, it is just as easy to become complacent.

One very important fact to remember when being hijacked:

Your life is worth more than your vehicle.



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Should the conclusion of the drama be by way of armed intervention, and escape is not possible, immediately drop to the ground, remain still and obey the orders of the leader.

If confronted:

- Do not lose your temper, threaten or challenge the hijacker.
- **DO EXACTLY AS TOLD BY THE HIJACKERS!**
- Do not resist, especially if the hijacker has a weapon. Surrender your vehicle and move away. Try to put as much distance between yourself and the hijacker(s) as speedily as possible.
- Do not reach for your purse or valuables. Leave everything in the vehicle.
- Try to remain calm at all times and do not show signs of aggression.
- Be compliant to all demands set by the perpetrator.
- Do not make eye contact with the hijacker. He may perceive this behavior as a threat and retaliate aggressively.
- Keep your hands still and visible to the hijacker, so as to give him assurance of your passive content.
- Do not speak too fast (if you are able to talk) and do not make sudden movements.
- Gather as much information as possible without posing a threat.
 - How many people?
 - How many firearms and description thereof?
 - What were the perpetrators wearing (clothing)?
 - To which direction did they drive off?
 - Take note of the language they use (the accent).
- First phone the SA Police Service on **08600 10111**. They will dispatch the medical services if needed. Other emergency numbers you could phone are **112** ANY Network (Vodacom+MTN+Cell C) or **147** Vodacom ONLY.
- Activate the vehicle-tracking device, if the vehicle is fitted with one.

The Effects of Trauma:

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

This is the term given to a particular range and combination of reactions following trauma. Reactions following trauma can be divided into three main groups:

- **Re-experiencing the event** – a feeling that you are experiencing the original event all over again, through memories intruding into your waking or sleeping life.
- **Arousal reactions** – you feel persistently aroused, nervous, agitated sense, anxious, tense, unable to settle or concentrate, over-reacting very sharply to small things and especially, having trouble sleeping.
- **Avoidance reactions** – you make frantic efforts to avoid anything that could remind you of the trauma, or cause you to think or talk about it in any way. You may shut down your feelings about other people and things you normally care about and keep to yourself. You may feel unusually withdrawn and emotionally numb.

Five stages of trauma / loss:

- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression

Your life is worth more than your vehicle.



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- Acceptance

The following is some general advice to help you cope with trauma in general and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in particular:

Do:

- Express your emotions.
- Talk about what has happened as often as you need to. Seek trauma counselling.
- Try to keep your life as normal as possible by following daily routines.
- Find opportunities to review the experience.
- Look to friends and colleagues for support.

Don't:

- Use alcohol, nicotine or other drugs to hide your feelings.
- Simply stay away from work or isolate yourself. Seek help and support instead (counselling).
- Allow anger and irritability to mask your feelings.
- Hide your feelings and be afraid to ask for help.
- Think your feelings are a sign of weakness.

Remember that your life is worth more than your vehicle!

For more information on the Hijack Prevention & Survival Course, please contact:

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