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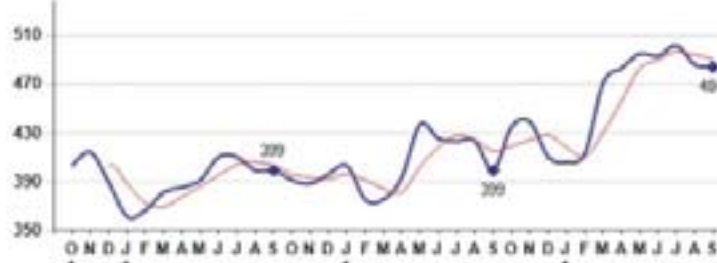
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Car Alarms and Common Sense

Preventing car theft in Orinda

By Laurie Snyder

You drive into the gas station, start the fill-up process, and step away from the vehicle for a minute, just to grab a Coke at the station's mini-mart. As you turn your head, you realize belatedly that your beloved sweet ride is burning rubber as it heads for the freeway or San Pablo Dam Road.

One unlucky Orinda driver recently experienced a similar situation. Although the suspect was eventually nabbed and the vehicle recovered, the incident inspired Scott Haggard, Orinda's police chief, to reach out to Orindans with some advice. "When traveling or even in town, never leave your car running or your keys in

the ignition at convenience stores or gas stations." Criminals are often just waiting for an opportunity to strike – even in Lamorinda where gas stations are conveniently located near BART and the freeway for busy crooks on the go.

"I have arrested many people who possess sets of 'shaved keys,'" says Haggard. "These are keys from different makes and models of cars that are shaped to rough fit in ignitions." Less urbane miscreants will simply jam screwdrivers into and break ignitions before starting targeted vehicles with large vice-grips.

"Get in the habit of setting the

alarm whenever you are away from your car in public places," advises Haggard. Or, at least place valuables out of sight and lock your vehicle. For additional tips or other information, call the Orinda Police: (925) 254-6820.

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