

FROM THE POLICE CHIEF

*PREVENTION [ASSAULT] WHILE DRIVING

The most common place for an assault to take place in on a road or highway. Perhaps this is because a vehicle [either yours or the assailant's] provides the assailant with privacy and mobility.

Park in well-lit, well traveled areas. Remember where you parked so you won't have to hunt for your car. Ask for an escort to your car if you feel at risk.

Keep your car doors locked and windows rolled up at all times, especially while you are in it. But be aware that windows can easily be broken out by any determined attacker.

Have your keys ready so that you can enter your car as quickly as possible and lock the door.

Before entering your car, visually check inside, under and around it to ensure that no one is hidden.

If you find anything wrong with your car, go back to the safety of the building and get help. Be cautious of anyone who might be standing by or offering assistance with your car. He may have sabotaged it in the first place.

Keep your car in good running condition with at least a quarter tank of gas at all times. Locking gas tanks and inside hood releases will help deter sabotage attempts.

Keep some money hidden in your car in case you ever need it to take a cab or for some other unexpected problem.

Learn how to change a flat tire so you won't have to sit stranded. If you have a flat tire in an unsafe place, you can usually continue driving at a reduced speed until you get to a safe place to stop.

If your car breaks down, here are two possible options that you might consider, depending on the circumstances:

Raise the hood and remain in your car with the windows up and doors locked. Display a large "CALL POLICE" sign if you have one. If someone stops, ask them, through the window, to call the police or a towing service.

Attach a white cloth on your antenna or other visible place and leave a "CALL POLICE" sign or a note in your window asking whomever might stop to call the police. You can then either walk to safety or if you feel it warranted, hide off the road until someone stops that you feel is less risky to approach.

Do not stop to help other motorists, but rather call help for them at your earliest convenience.

If you are summoned to stop by a vehicle with a blue light, legally you are required to do so immediately in North Carolina. However, if you have reason to believe that the vehicle may not be official, and you fear for your safety, you may want to carefully drive to the nearest safe place where there are lights and people before you stop. Unmarked police vehicles are required to sound their sirens as well as flash their blue-lights should they summon you to stop after-dark.

While driving or stopped at intersections, try to leave enough room between yourself and the vehicle in front of you to provide an escape route around them if necessary. If someone tries to enter your car and you cannot immediately move, then honk the horn, yell and attract attention. If he gets in throw out the keys and get out immediately.

If you are being followed or harassed, drive to the nearest safe place where there are people.