



NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH - GAS STATION THEFTS

Thieves find ways of catching their victims by complete surprise when they are pumping gas or paying their tab inside the station. Most of the time gas station customers leave their car doors unlocked and items such as purses, wallets, backpacks and even the keys are left in plain view. A thief is able to drive up (or even walk up) to your car, open the unlocked door, and grab any valuables within reach. Then he/she quickly leaves the area. It can happen in a matter of seconds, but these thefts can be prevented if you follow these tips to protect yourself from being a victim.

- Pick stations that are well-lit and have pump video surveillance cameras.
- Always remove your keys and lock the doors while you are pumping gas.
- Keep valuables out of plain view in your vehicle and lock the doors even if you are only going inside for a moment.
- Pay attention to your surroundings!
- Don't let your cell phone distract you.

Additionally, make it a habit to look for skimming devices attached to the pump before you insert your credit card. Skimmers are small devices that thieves place on or above the card readers at the gas pumps (and ATMs) to copy and steal your credit card information.

Here's a great article to read all about skimmers, how they work and what to do if you fall victim of a theft related to a skimmer:

<https://www.rd.com/article/gas-pump-skimmer/>

A quick couple of tips:

- Inspect the terminal before you insert your card. Skimmers are becoming harder and harder to recognize but if your pump looks different than the next one, then something might be wrong. Go ahead, give it a tug at the terminal to make sure things are secure as they should be. Taking those extra few seconds before pumping your gas could very well save you a lot of head ache after. (A few pictures of common skimmers at the end of the article).
- Also look for any hidden cameras that thieves may have installed to capture your PIN when you enter it.
- Select a pump that is closer to the front of the store and in eye line of the attendant. Thieves tend to pick the farthest pump that is easily blocked by traffic at the pumps.
- Avoid using a debit card, if possible. Debit cards force you to enter your PIN which in turn could get stolen.
- Touch pay is always safer than swiping. This is a good habit to get into not only at the gas station but places you shop.
- If you have been compromised at a particular location, one option would be to not go to the same location again since the crooks know it's a good spot and the vendor is likely not doing much to prevent it from happening.

EXAMPLES OF WHAT A SKIMMER MIGHT LOOK LIKE

