

The power of prevention

Absorbed in my notes, the deafening sound of Ruan's gun clashing on the vehicle window and shouting "get out of your car" snaps me out of my thoughts and into a scenario only imagined in my nightmares. My hand flies to mouth as Ruan, still banging on the window, yanks viciously at the door handle. Overcome with shock inside the car, the volunteer 'victim' attempts to unbuckle and leave the vehicle as quickly as possible. Gun still pointed, Ruan manages to haul the gentleman out of the vehicle – leaving us wide-eyed in disbelief.

AVOIDANCE IS KEY

Making my way eagerly to the front of the crowd, I am the first to be introduced to Ruan Venter – the Volkswagen Driving Academy hijack prevention expert. Following a brief introduction to the rest of the audience, Ruan explains that he is to present a hijack prevention course. He sets the tone, stating that whilst one cannot ever be completely safe from a hijacking, by utilising the learnings from the course one can decrease the chances of being caught up in a hijacking.

With this course, the Volkswagen Driving Academy aims to educate audiences to become more alert, and to develop the ability to spot the warning signs of impending danger. Being able to avoid dangerous scenarios altogether increases one's chance of survival. Ruan's introduction makes one thing clear – you never want to be in a hijack situation.

HANDS UP

Using a wide-screen powerpoint presentation containing live police footage, and what Ruan calls his "toys", the course follows, in sequence, a typical hijacking scenario.

Following a brief introduction to the legal and dictionary definitions of 'hijacking', Ruan differentiates between the four typical types of hijackings, followed by broad statistics revealing days, times, and places where hijackings are most likely to occur.

Throughout the course, the emphasis on avoiding a hijacking is key. Ruan then dedicates a considerable amount of time to prevention tactics in similar situations, such as: approaching and entering your driveway (where the majority of hijackings take place), parking your vehicle, entering your vehicle when parked, and whilst driving.

According to Ruan, defensive strategies and tactics to avoid a hijacking begin with common sense. "Start observing more closely what happens around you. This way you are more likely to spot anything suspicious," says Ruan. He continues that you should form a strong relationship with your neighbourhood police service, and make use of them. And most importantly, know your emergency numbers.

This was followed by the optimal way to respond should you find yourself in a hijack situation, and how to react. With two children of his own, Ruan's course includes teaching your children the correct and safest way to react in a hijack scenario, as well as what to do should they be taken against their will.

Implement these expert tactics from the Volkswagen Driving Academy to avoid a hijack scenario

By Nicola Honey

SAFETY TACTICS

- Observe more closely what happens around you both when approaching your car and driving
- Be vigilant when leaving and driving up to your driveway or gate – this is a hot spot for hijackers
- Familiarise and strengthen ties with the neighbourhood police
- Know your emergency numbers and teach your children what to do in an emergency
- Use a handsfree set at all times when driving. Talking on your cellphone is not only illegal, your concentration is proven to be lowered. This puts you and your family at risk of accidents and hijackers taking advantage of the distraction
- Keep your bag, lunch and any other valuables in your boot when you drive
- Keep any CDs, clothing and cellphones packed away in your car completely out of sight when driving
- Avoid parking close to the entrance of shopping malls, as your car may become a target for a getaway car for would-be robbers

Ruan concludes the theoretical aspect of his hijack prevention course with the correct way to report a hijacking to the SAPS, the legalities behind self-defence, and lastly dealing with the trauma of a hijacking.

ARM YOURSELF

As Ruan steps out of the vehicle following his vivid hijack demonstration, the enormity of a hijacking is only just becoming real to us. If a demonstration alone could induce such shock in the 'victim' and the audience, the trauma behind a hijacking must be devastating.

By implementing the Volkswagen Driving Academy's hijack prevention tactics you have the ability to adapt your driving behaviour, thereby protecting you and your family from a potential hijack situation. 🇻🇪

To find out more about the Hijack Prevention Course, or to book, contact the Volkswagen Driving Academy on: (011) 466 9127/9, email info@vwda.co.za or visit www.vw.co.za/about/drivingacademy



Ruan Venter offers a hands-on understanding of safe behaviour in a hijack scenario as part of the hijack prevention course

