

Increased hijackings on Ventersdorp/Coligny N14 road

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Police in Bokone Bophirima have warned motorists travelling along the N14 and R503 road between Ventersdorp and Coligny to be more cautious after a string of hijacks took place there.

Provincial police spokesperson, Brigadier Sabata Mokgwabone, urged motorists to be cautious at all times when stopping alongside the road or when ordered to stop by other motorists as that could be a hijacking trap.

"This follows reports to the police of a few incidents in which vehicles were recently hijacked by unknown suspects. A driver was stopped by a person who asked for help after an alleged hijack in one of incidents in August 2017 along the N14 near the Ventersdorp crossing. The driver stopped to assist the person and was suddenly pointed with a firearm. Three robbers, including the one who asked for help, allegedly forced him to drive to Klerksdorp. The victim was then tied up and placed in the backseat of his vehicle. He was later dropped off on a gravel road near a mine at East-Driefontein," Mokgwabone said.

The suspects took the victim's car and personal belongings, according to the police spokesperson.

Mokgwabone said another driver was robbed and hijacked in an unrelated incident this month (September) along the N14 road closer to Coligny.

"A driver was parked close to a garage and he was approached by a person asking for directions. Whilst still talking to the man, the driver was suddenly pointed with a firearm by the direction seeker and instructed him to drive towards Coligny. The motorist was hijacked and robbed of his personal belongings. The suspect left him stranded next to the road. Motorists are therefore requested to exercise caution when stopped by unknown persons and to report such incidents to the nearest police station," he said.

As part of curbing such incidents, Mokgwabone said motorists are requested to take heed and apply the following safety hints:

- A well-maintained car is less likely to break down and leave you vulnerable.
- Plan your route and let someone know what your route is and when to expect you at your destination.
- Always check the rear view mirror to see if you are being followed.
- Avoid driving with your windows open and keep the doors locked and put all valuables out of sight.

- Avoid distractions while driving such as using a cellular phone.
- If you suspect you are being followed, drive to the nearest police station or a busy public area.
- When approaching a red traffic light, slow down so that you only reach it when it turns green, especially during the night.
- If possible, park in a central, well-lit place, preferably with guards on duty.
- When stopping behind another vehi-

cle, leave half a vehicle length in front so you can make an emergency escape if necessary.

- Avoid driving through unfamiliar areas.
- "Avoid driving late, at night or early hours of the morning when the roads are quiet. Drive in the centre lane away from pedestrians where possible. If possible, never drive alone. NEVER, EVER pick up hitchhikers or strangers.

"It is important not to follow routine

routes when driving. We advise motorists to change their routine on a regular basis. They must also avoid driving in the dark because hijackers may stage a minor accident. They might deliberately bump into your vehicle from behind. If you do not feel comfortable with the individual involved in the situation with, indicate that he/she must follow you and drive to the nearest police station or any busy public area for help," he concludes.