Tow truck robber caught on camera

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By KUTLWANO OLIFANT

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A tow truck stops next to the car. The driver gets out, smashes a window and removes a laptop bag. Photo: Matthews Baloyi

Johannesburg - A tow truck driver has been caught on camera breaking into a silver Chevrolet parked in downtown Joburg.

The theft took place on Tuesday in Jeppe Street, Newtown, shortly before 2pm.

The driver was arrested the next day after showing up at an accident scene.

Two days earlier, a group of armed hijackers held up a family in full view of other motorists, who had to swerve past the scene.

In that daylight robbery in the Joburg CBD, the thugs sped off in a white Toyota RAV4.

That incident was also captured on film and the clip went viral on YouTube.

The CCTV camera follows the tow truck as it turns into Carr Street. Photo: Matthews Baloyi
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The car break-in clip starts with a woman parking her vehicle and crossing the road.

It's unclear whether she is heading to the Social Development office or an arts and crafts shop in Jeppe Street.

About a minute later, a tow truck driver pulls up next to the Chevrolet. He jumps out, leaving the doors of his white van open and blocking the view of bystanders on Mary Fitzgerald Square as well as motorists driving past.

The truck driver approaches the Chevrolet from the passenger's side and breaks a window, using an unidentified object.

He steals a laptop and other valuables that cannot be made out on the clip.

The break-in and theft last two minutes.

Exactly five minutes later, CCTV cameras capture the tow truck at the corner of Bree and Quinn streets.

Nineteen minutes into the clip, the van is seen driving from Carr into Bree Street again. It then disappears from the area the cameras cover.

The cameras pick up the van again the following day just before 8am.

The man is seen at the corner of Marshall and Auret streets, reporting at an accident scene.

At 7.44am, the tow truck driver, dressed in a navy striped T-shirt, is seen parking his vehicle and heading to the scene.

At this point, an investigation to confirm the car's registration number is in progress, with metro officers at the Johannesburg metro police department (JMPD) CCTV control room communicating with their colleagues at the scene.

A few minutes later, a unit from the Joburg metro police arrives at the scene and makes an arrest.

Ten minutes later, a police officer drives the tow truck driver away in his vehicle.

JMPD spokeswoman Edna Mamonyane said: "At this stage (of the tow truck driver's arrival), both our members at the scene and at the control room began communicating. Remember, we had lost the vehicle the day of the incident on our footage.

"Therefore, we acted immediately when they recognised the vehicle at the scene."

The suspect is Quaide van Eden. He appeared in the Johannesburg Magistrate's Court on Friday charged with breaking into a motor vehicle and theft.

SAPS spokesman Warrant Officer Xoli Mbele said the police were investigating the case.

Mbele said there were allegations that Van Eden could have committed other similar incidents.

Mamonyane said metro police believed a syndicate might be operating in the CBD.

kutlwano.olifant@inl.co.za

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