

# Facts About Auto Theft

**FACT:** Nearly 1 in 5 stolen vehicles are left unlocked with the keys in the ignition.

**FACT:** Over half of all vehicle thefts occur in residential areas.

**FACT:** More than two thirds of auto thefts happen at night.

**FACT:** A car is five times more likely to be stolen from an unattended lot than from the street or an attended lot.

**FACT:** Good anti-theft devices slow down thieves and increase their risk of discovery.

## Auto Theft Precautions and Securing Your Vehicle:

- Always remove the keys from your car, lock all doors and shut windows tightly every time you leave your car.
- Park in well lighted and highly visible areas.
- Never hide a spare key to your vehicle on or inside the vehicle.
- Do not leave valuables in plain view. This includes cell phone chargers, CDs, even pocket change for the parking meter.
- Do not leave titles or bills of sale in your vehicle; the title can be altered easily and/or your signature can be forged.
- Drop a personal business card into the door frame.
- Have the vehicle identification number etched on window glass trim as well as other parts of the car; T-tops, radio, CD player, etc.
- Back your car into the driveway. If you drive forward into the driveway, a perpetrator could raise the hood to hot wire the car and it would appear to the neighbors that you were just working on the car.
- When parking in attended lots or parking garages, leave only the ignition key with the attendant.
- Lock your registration and insurance documents in the trunk. Some recommend keeping this information in your wallet or anyplace, but your car.
- Always lock your garage door.

## Vehicle Security Devices

Any device can be defeated by a determined thief if they are given enough time to operate undetected. Your first consideration should be to follow the advice about locking and parking your vehicle.

- When purchasing a vehicle, check the manufacturer's list on anti-theft options, such as interior hood and trunk releases, locking steering columns, locking gas caps, and alarm systems.
- You may want to consider installing a disabler switch or "kill switch" which will prevent a thief from starting the car or a fuel switch which stops the fuel supply.
- Anti-theft bars or steering wheel locking devices prevent the steering wheel from being turned. They are highly visible and may act as a deterrent.
- Armored Collar is a metal shield that locks around the steering column and covers the ignition, the starter rod, and the steering wheel interlock rod.
- Crook Lock is a long metal bar that has a hook on each end to lock the steering wheel to the brake pedal.
- Tire Locks make the car nearly impossible to move. These are like the boot which are used by Police Depts.

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## **Car Alarms**

The typical car alarm is equipped with motion sensors, impact sensors and a loud siren or series of tones. A current listing of alarms includes the Audible Alarm, Motion Detector, Current Sensor, Computerized Ignition Immobilizer, Sight and Sound Computerized Alarm and Silent Paging System. The best alarms activate themselves automatically when you leave the vehicle and include an automatic kill switch. The better models also flash the headlights and honk the horn in addition to sounding a siren. Ravelco System is an electronic plug that when removed makes it impossible to start the vehicle. Alarm systems are available at automotive part dealers, major department stores, car dealers, or through mail order catalogs or online.

## **Electronic Tracking Devices**

An electronic transmitter hidden in the vehicle emits a signal that is picked up by the police or a monitoring system. Tracking devices are effective in helping authorities recover vehicles before they can be stripped.

## **Protect Yourself When Buying and Selling a Car**

- Beware of fast pressure sells.
- Be cautious of the low priced bargain car.
- Check the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) to see if it has been altered.
- Be suspicious of fresh paint on the car.
- Verify that the inspection sticker and the license tag are current and from the same state.
- Do not accept duplicate car keys.
- Complete all paper work at the time of sale.

### **IF YOU ARE SELLING A CAR:**

- Never allow a person to test drive the vehicle alone.
- Ask to see an interested buyer's driver's license, and write down the name, address, and driver's license number, etc.
- Make certain the driver's door contains a federal motor vehicle safety standard label. This label is often called a mylar sticker and it contains the vehicle identification number. Presence of the label is required by law.

## **If Your Car is Stolen...**

Call the police. Vehicle theft should be reported as soon as possible. However before the vehicle can be listed as stolen, you must have your vehicle's license number and/or the vehicle identification number (VIN). An officer will take the report over the telephone. By making a report over the phone, the needed information about your vehicle can be directly entered into the Police Department's computer system. This enables officers to immediately identify your vehicle as being stolen. Stolen vehicles are sometimes used in the commission of other crimes. Quick action often results in recovery of your vehicle as well as prevention of another crime. If the criminal is apprehended, be willing to file charges and testify in court.