

VEHICLE CRIME

Warwickshire Police would like to offer the following advice to help the public protect themselves against vehicle crime.

Doors and Windows - Always make sure that doors are locked, and windows and sun-roof are shut when leaving the vehicle.

Keep your valuables and possessions safe and out of sight - Do not leave **any** belongings on display, even items of low or little monetary value.

Coats and Clothing - These are frequently left on view in the back seat of cars. They are popular with thieves, not only for their resale value, but because the pockets may contain valuable items such as money or keys.

Electronic Items and Jewellery - A potential treasure trove awaits a car criminal who sees items such as cameras, video cameras, watches and even jewellery left on view inside a car. A smashed window, a few seconds and they are away with your property. Always take your property with you.

Laptop Computers - Never leave your laptop in your car. These have a high resale value for car criminals who will be more than happy to steal them if they are left on view.

Car Stereos/iPods - Car stereos are easily removed from cars and can be sold on quickly. Always take the detachable control panel with you when you leave your vehicle. If there is a PIN security code number with the audio equipment ensure it has been activated. Never keep the PIN with the stereo or with the user manual in the car and make a note of the stereo serial number. The use of iPods in cars, as an alternative to car stereos, has greatly increased. Always remember to remove both iPod and cradle when leaving the car.

CDs - CDs left on view in a vehicle are music to car criminal's ears who will steal them to sell on. Never have large numbers of CDs in your vehicle and always keep them out of sight.

Wallets, Purses and Credit Cards - These are attractive to car thieves as they are the gateway to untold riches. Always take your money / wallet / purse with you, do not hide inside the car. The first two places a car thief will look on breaking into a car are within the glove box or under the seat.

Mobile Phones - Mobile phones have a high resale value for the car criminal; they are easy to carry and sell on. If stolen it means inconvenience for the owner as the loss of business and personal contact numbers means no one will be able to contact you. It may also take time to replace your phone and re-establish the contacts.

Car Keys - Keep your car keys safe at all times – **Always** remove keys from the ignition and lock all doors when leaving the vehicle. It only takes a thief a few seconds to jump into your car and drive away. At home, keep your car keys in a safe place which is out of sight and away from windows and doors.

Security Devices - Many newer cars will already be fitted with an immobiliser and/or car alarm, if not consider having one professionally fitted. Car alarms should conform to the BS 6803 standard. Electronic immobilisers, which prevent the car from starting, or mechanical immobilisers such as steering wheel locks, will also deter car thieves. Steering wheel locks are in-expensive and available

from most car accessories stores. To prevent tyre theft fit wheel nuts, they are inexpensive and easy to install.

Security Marking - Consider marking all your valuables with a unique identification number such as your postcode. Also consider having your car's registration number or the last 7 digits of your Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) etched onto all glass surfaces, including headlamps. These numbers can be linked to recognised security databases. Also, make a note of the car's chassis number.

Parking - When parking in public streets and roads leave your car where it can be seen by others, not out of sight. Look for a car park that is well supervised. At night, avoid parking in areas with little or no lighting. Remember to tuck in wing mirrors and put the aerial down to discourage vandalism.

If you have a garage try to park your car in it overnight. If you have a private driveway parking your car on it regularly, instead of a public road may reduce your car insurance premiums.

Car-jacking - Help prevent yourself being a victim of car-jacking by:

- *keeping your doors locked whilst driving and trying to keep windows wound up, especially at traffic lights.
- *being aware of what people around you are doing.
- *not stopping to assist someone who has broken down. If you want to help, pull over at the next garage or police station and call for help.
- *driving to the next garage or police station to report anyone who tries to pull you over for apparently no reason. Even if they prove to have a valid reason, it's best to be cautious.
- *not driving home if another car appears to be following you. Memorise the registration number, write down when safe to do so and drive to a police station or area where people are present.
- *not getting out of your car if you suspect a car-jacker has **accidentally** bumped into you and it is not a genuine accident. Car-jackers will sometimes adopt this tactic to get you out of your vehicle so they can steal it. If this happens wind the window down a little to talk to them. If they are genuine, insurance details etc can be exchanged in this manner.

Sat Navs -

- *Mark your Sat Nav with your car's registration number to make it harder to sell if stolen.
- *Never programme your home address into the device under the title "home" as a thief will be able to locate where you live. If your car is in town, they may assume that your home is likely to be empty.
- *Never leave your Sat Nav equipment in the car, always take it with you.
- *Make sure the Sat Nav cradle is removed from the windscreen and keep a cloth in the vehicle to wipe away any suction mark left on the glass. Thieves may see this mark as an indication that there is a Sat Nav hidden within the car.
- *Make a note of the serial number and keep the information in a safe place in case the device is stolen.
- *Security mark each part of your Sat Nav with SmartWater or an ultra violet marker. If stolen, using either of these marking systems will help the police re-unite you with your property if recovered.

Theft of car number plates and catalytic converters - Number plates are generally stolen in order to be used on vehicles involved in other criminal activity. You can prevent this by having anti-theft number plates fitted that shatter when anyone tampers with them, or fitting self locking screws.

In order to reduce the risk of catalytic converters being stolen always park in busy, well lit car parks, or in areas with security coverage that includes CCTV.

Tradesmen - Power tools and other work equipment - Never ever leave tools in your van overnight. Always remove, put them in a secure area and place a notice or sticker in the van window stating that all tools have been removed. If stolen you will not only have the expense and frustration of having to source and replace specialist equipment but could lose valuable work if you don't have the tools to do the job.

In situations where emptying your van is not possible, fit a battery powered alarm. These can be easily installed into the back of a van, are remotely set and release an audible siren which activates as soon as the vehicle is entered. No potential thief will want to hang about to be seen.

The above items belong to you; you've worked hard to afford them. Help protect yourself, vehicle and belongings from car thieves.

If you are a victim of car crime report it to the police.

