

Car crime

The good news is that vehicle crime has gone down by over 30% in the last five years. The bad news is that it is still out there for some so we must all keep alert. Nearly 1.5 million vehicle-related thefts were recorded in 2007-08 and car-related crimes accounted for 13% of all recorded crime in England and Wales with vehicles over 9 years old accounting for two thirds of cars stolen.

However, we are twice as likely to have our vehicle broken into than stolen which leaves us with a big repair bill as well as the cost of replacing the stolen items.

If we remember some simple but key rules, there is no reason for us to become a victim.

- When you leave your car, always lock it. This includes the sunroof and windows. If you are just popping in to buy your paper or paying for your petrol, don't be tempted to leave the keys in the ignition because you will be gone for long and you can see your car through the shop window. It takes seconds for a thief to steal your car or belongings. Always lock it.
- Don't leave anything on display on your car, particularly when it's parked over night. 63% of thefts of and from vehicles happen when they are parked outside the home. A jacket might have a wallet in the pocket and so a thief will break in to find out. If you are shopping, put your purchases in the boot if you can't take them with you.
- If you have a radio with a removable front panel, take it with you when you leave the car. Don't leave your satellite navigation device in the car and remove the support cradle from the windscreen/dashboard as well as wiping away any suction marks left by the cradle.
- Whenever possible park in busy or well lit areas near to CCTV cameras or in police approved cars parks (look out for 'ParkMarkTM' on signs).
- Tuck in wing mirrors and put the aerial down to discourage vandals.
- Never store your car's documents in your vehicle and keep all spare keys at home but not by the front door as thieves could go fishing through your letter box to hook the keys out and steal your car.
- If your car hasn't an alarm, have one professionally fitted or have a Thatcham-approved electronic immobiliser fitted or buy a steering lock for a visible deterrent.
- When you are driving, keep the doors locked. In slow traffic, keep the windows up and property out of view, a thief can lean in to steal from you before you even realise they are there.
- While you are driving and something occurs which concerns you, for example, someone appears to have broken down in an isolated area or someone has 'accidentally' bumped into your car, aiming to get you out of your car or even if someone tries to get you to pull over for no reason, you should drive to the next garage or police station and report the matter.

For more information, visit www.secureyourmotor.gov.uk and www.safeparking.com

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