

How to Prevent Auto Theft

THE FACTS ARE...

Each year, more than one million vehicles are reported stolen in the United States. This averages out to about one vehicle every thirty seconds.

Car thieves, like home burglars, generally have an easy time. The crime is made simple by car owners who obligingly leave doors unlocked (in four out of five cases of auto theft) or who leave keys in the ignition (in one out of five cases).

Though professional car thieves have entered the field in increasing numbers, most cars are still taken by amateurs who can be stopped fairly easily. You can greatly increase your protection against this type of crime by taking the following sensible precautions:

REDUCE YOUR RISK

- Never leave your keys in an unattended car, even while running a quick errand. Always lock your car.
- Potential car thieves often note identification numbers printed on ignition keys. They then obtain duplicates from car dealers by posing as the car's owner and presenting the key number. You can help deter this practice by having a car dealer or locksmith punch out these numbers from your keys. Before you do this, however, record the numbers in a safe place in case you need duplicates.



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- Never attach a tag with your name and address to a key ring. If the keys are lost or stolen, the tag will lead the thief directly to your car and home.
- Leave only the ignition key with a parking attendant. A dishonest parking attendant may have house keys duplicated and sell them for a profit, along with your name and address.

PARK CAREFULLY

- Avoid leaving your car in an unattended parking lot for an extended period of time. A car is five times more likely to be stolen from an unattended lot than from an attended lot or the street.
- At night, park in well-lit areas with pedestrian traffic. Auto thieves don't like working in spots where they are clearly visible.
- Always take parking tickets with you. Do not leave them in the car.
- Whenever possible, turn wheels sharply toward the curb when parking. This makes it extra difficult for thieves to tow your car.

LOCK IT

- Lock all doors and roll up windows when ever leaving your vehicle unattended. Be sure vent windows, a favorite means of entry for thieves, are shut tight.
- Take the keys with you.
- Make sure all easy-to-carry items like motors, water skis, and camping gear are locked up before leaving your vehicle unattended.
- Vehicles carried on trailers should be secured with a strong chain and padlock.

1910 E. Kimberly Road ♦ PO Box 4227 ♦ Davenport, IA 52808 ♦ 800-4-PER-MAR ♦ www.permarsecurity.com

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OPERATION IDENTIFICATION

With an electric engraver, etch your driver's license number on CB's, tape decks, and similar items. Consider engraving the same number in several places under the hood, on the car doors, trunk lid, or other conspicuous places so that a positive identification can be made of your vehicle if it is recovered after a theft.

Record your vehicle identification number and store it in a safe place. This number is usually located on a small metal plate on the driver's side of the dashboard.

Never leave your driver's license, automobile registration, or proof of insurance inside an unlocked vehicle. If you do, thieves will be able to produce legitimate documents when stopped by police. Remember that the registration and proof of insurance must be with you whenever you are driving your car.

SECURITY ALARMS

Most cars sold in America today can be purchased with a factory-installed security system. If your vehicle does not already have one, you might consider the purchase and installation of security devices such as:

- An interior hood lock and release.
- A locking gas cap.
- A second ignition switch or "kill switch" which prevents electrical current from reaching the coil or distributor.



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- A fuel switch which prevents fuel from reaching the carburetor.
- An alarm device which will activate a siren, horn, or lights (or all three) to frighten the thief away before he is able to steal your car.

THEFT OF OTHER VEHICLES

Theft of trucks and recreational vehicles is on the increase. Because they are not always serialized by the manufacturer, recoveries are few. Mark your vehicle with an identification number such as your driver's license in a conspicuous place.

Theft of snowmobiles, motorcycles, boats, and trail bikes are also increasing. Many of the same precautions that apply to cars and bicycles also apply to recreational vehicles.

WHAT TO DO

If your vehicle is broken into or stolen, inform the police immediately. Stolen vehicles are often used in the commission of another crime. Quick action by you may not only aid in the recovery of your vehicle, but prevent its use for illegal purposes. If you recover your own vehicle, notify the police immediately.

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