

Auto Theft Prevention

Automobile Theft Prevention

A car is stolen in Texas every 5 minutes. No matter what kind of vehicle you drive, old or new – car or truck – you could be the next victim. The following information could help keep you and your vehicle safe.

Tips to Protect Your Vehicle

- Take Your Keys. One out of every five vehicles stolen had the keys in it.
- Lock Your Car. Almost half of all vehicles stolen were left unlocked.
- Don't Hide a Second Set of Keys in Your Car. Extra keys can easily be found if a thief takes time to look.
- Park in Well-Lighted Areas.
- Park in Attended Lots. Auto thieves do not like witnesses and prefer unattended parking lots.
- Only give ignition/door key to parking attendant. If your trunk and glove box use the same key as the door, have one of them changed. Don't give the attendant easy access to your glove box and trunk. Upon returning, check the tires, spare and battery to insure they are the same as those you had when you parked.
- Don't leave your car running unattended. Vehicles are commonly stolen at convenience stores, gas stations, ATM's, etc. Many vehicles are also stolen on cold mornings when the owner leaves the vehicle running to warm up.
- Completely Close Car Windows When Parking. Don't make it any easier for the thief to enter your vehicle.
- Hide Your Valuables. Don't make your car a more desirable target for thieves by leaving valuables in plain sight.

Anti-Theft Devices

- Many car insurance companies may give you a discount for certain anti-theft devices. Check with your agent for details.
- Ignition Kill Switch. Splice an inexpensive toggle switch into your ignition wire or to your starter. The trick is hiding the switch well. Keypads, pressure pads and more expensive "Immobilizers" and "Passkeys" can also be used.
- Fuel Kill Switch. The valve that halts the fuel supply is closed.
- Visible Steering Wheel Lock. Prevents the steering wheel from being turned.
- Floorboard Locks. Devices that disable the gas or brake pedal.
- Gearshift Locks. Disables shifting of the transmission.
- Tire/Wheel Locks. Prevents the vehicle from moving.
- Hood Locks. Prevents the thief from gaining access to your security system and battery.
- Armored Collar Around the Steering Column. Protects the column and ignition.

- Alarms. Security systems which make loud warning sounds when doors/hood/trunk are opened. Optional sensors detect glass breakage, motion, tampering, and towing. Panic buttons, back-up batteries, flashing parking lights or headlights, and automatic engine-disable features are also popular.
- Vehicle Tracking. Transmitter hidden in car enables police to track car (may not be available in all areas).

How to Spot a Stolen Vehicle

Many stolen vehicles are sold to unsuspecting buyers. If you knowingly buy a stolen car, you can be arrested. If you buy a stolen car unknowingly, you could lose the car and your money. To avoid becoming the car thief's second victim, we urge you to keep these tips in mind:

- When buying from a private individual, make sure the title and registration match the name and address of the person selling the car.
- Be cautious of a seller with no fixed address, place of employment or phone number.
- Ask the seller for references about past financing and insurance on the vehicle. Verify the information with the bank, finance company or agent.
- Ensure the vehicle identification number (VIN) on the automobile's dash is present, secure and unaltered.
- Check to ensure the VIN plate has not been repainted and the numbers stamped in the plate appear to be the original factory numbers.
- If in doubt about plate authenticity, check with a new car dealer who handles the same model, or contact a law enforcement agency. (Thieves may remove the VIN plate and replace it with one from a similar wrecked vehicle.)
- Be suspicious of any deal that seems "too good to be true."