

Auto Theft Prevention Tips

Auto theft, more often than not, is a crime of opportunity. Don't be an easy target. You can reduce your risk of becoming a victim of auto theft if you make these simple rules a part of your regular driving routine:

- Lock your car
- Take your keys
- Never leave your car running unattended, even for a minute
- Don't hide spare keys on your vehicle
- Roll your windows up all the way, even in hot weather
- Park in well-lit areas
- Park as near to an open business as possible
- Don't leave valuables in open sight; lock them in the trunk
- If you have a garage, use it, and lock the garage door

If your car is stolen or broken into, identification can make a difference between getting your property returned or losing it for good. Here are some tips:

- Etch your Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) on the window glass or trim
- Engrave your vehicles VIN on expensive aftermarket products, such as stereos, speakers, etc.
- Drop your business card into the doorframe
- Keep copies of vehicle paperwork, such as the title, at home rather than stored in the vehicle (an original title can be easily altered or your signature forged)
- Know your vehicle license plate number and identifying descriptors (make, model, year, bumper stickers, scratches, etc.)

If auto thieves are determined to steal your vehicle, they will probably succeed. However, anti-theft devices can make that more difficult, causing the thief to pass you by or stopping them completely. Below are some common anti-theft devices:

- **Alarms:** These devices set off loud signals, honk the horn, flash the headlights, or use some combination of the three to call attention to your vehicle when it has been tampered with. The advantage is that alarms are loud and startling. The disadvantage is that many situations can set alarms off, and false alarms have

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trained the public to generally ignore them. In addition, thieves can often find the power source and disarm the alarm.

- **Keyless Entry:** This system requires a signal from a remote control device, or a code entered on a keypad, to open your vehicle and start the engine.
- **Kill Switches:** These devices use a hidden switch to cut power to your vehicle's ignition or electronic fuel pump. The thief is able to crank your engine but can't make it start. Check to make sure the device will not nullify any warranty before having it installed.
- **Fuel Switches:** These switched cut off fuel supply. Either the vehicle won't start or it will run out of fuel in a short distance.
- **Steering wheel/steering column locks:** These locks prevent thieves from having access to the steering columns which is necessary for hot wiring an ignition or unlocking the steering wheel. Some devices lock the steering column to the brake pedal. The advantages to these types of locks are that they are obvious and may cause the thief to move on to an easier target; the disadvantage is that most locks can be broken.

