



Auto Theft Prevention

Handbook

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St. Louis County Police Department

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Checklist

Take a moment to write down your vehicle information here in case of a theft.

Vehicle	
Color:	Year:
Make:	Model:
Body Style:	VIN:
License Plate	
Plate #:	State:
Year:	
Insurance	
Insurance Company:	Policy #:

The Vehicle Identification Number is usually found on the driver's side windshield.

Helpful Links

For questions concerning titles, vehicle registration, transfer of title/registration, renewals, etc. check the Missouri Department of Revenue website at:

<http://dor.mo.gov/>

For a free Vehicle Identification Number search available to the public, check the National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB) website at:

https://www.nicb.org/theft_and_fraud_awareness/vincheck

To check into the reputation of dealerships prior to purchase, check the Better Business Bureau (BBB):

<http://www.bbb.org/>

For more information, facts, and statistics contact the Insurance Information Institute at:

http://www.iii.org/facts_statistics/auto-theft.html

Important Phone Numbers

Emergency	911
Non-Emergency	636-529-8210
TTY Hearing Impaired	636-529-8220 or 911

Precincts

North County	314-615-4297
Central County	314-615-0111
Affton-Southwest	314-638-5550
South County	314-615-0162
City of Fenton	636-349-8120
City of Wildwood	636-458-9194
West County	314-615-0700
City of Jennings	314-225-0425

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Auto Theft Statistics

An auto theft occurs every 33 seconds in the U.S. That is roughly 1 million vehicles each year that end up in the hands of thieves at a cost of nearly \$6.4 billion. So, who pays for these crimes? Regardless of whether or not your auto is ever stolen, we all pay the price for vehicle theft. You, your co-worker, your neighbor – we are all victims because we pay for this crime through higher insurance rates. According to the Insurance Information Institute, about one-fourth of a typical comprehensive auto insurance premium goes to pay for auto theft claims.

Without a doubt, vehicle theft is among the nation's most costly property crimes. It is a numbers game that adds up to every one of us having to pay hundreds of dollars each year in higher insurance premiums. And that is not an equation that works in our favor.

Even though most vehicles have factory-installed security systems, your car may still be vulnerable. The best line of protection is to install an additional anti-theft system to make stealing your vehicle more challenging for criminals. A range of solutions are now available on the market ranging from steering wheel locks to tracking systems. Whether you decide to spend \$10 or \$1,000, using more than one theft deterrent is well worth the investment in the long run.

Precautionary Measures

Taking precautionary measures can prevent you from becoming a victim of auto theft. Not only does auto theft cost the victim time and money,

More Than a Joyride

By the time you finish reading this paragraph, another vehicle will be stolen somewhere in the United States. Vehicle theft is no longer a crime committed just by teenagers out for a joyride. It is a big business run by organized crime rings that are out to make huge profits, and they are doing it at your expense.

The latest statistics from the Federal Bureau of Investigation indicate that only 57.2% of stolen vehicles are ever recovered, and that number has been decreasing for the last three years. Sometimes these vehicles are recovered with significant damage to them, but often, unrecovered autos wind up in the hands of organized criminals. From there, the vehicles might be:

- Shipped overseas and sold on the black market
- Stripped at a chop shop by criminals who sell the parts or install them on other vehicles
- Resold to an unsuspecting consumer

Make no mistake. Vehicle theft is driven by money and greed. It is a dangerous business that victimizes everyone.

Personal Safety Tips

Be cautious of strangers lingering in the area. Always have your keys in your hand, ready to unlock the door. Once inside the car, lock the doors, start the car, and drive away.

If you are confronted by someone who wants your car, do not resist their demand. Give them the car and run for help. **DO NOT GO WITH THEM!**

Criminals do not like light. When possible, park your car in a well-lit area. Also, check your surroundings when walking to and from your car.

Do not park next to a large truck, dumpster or anywhere thieves could be hiding.

Vehicle Purchases

Be cautious of online vehicle purchases. If you cannot test drive or physically see a vehicle before purchase, there may be a reason. Thieves can take advantage of your trusting nature.

Do not purchase a vehicle from someone that does not have a title. Many thieves will steal vehicles and sell them to innocent citizens claiming, "they sent off for the title."

If you feel uneasy or question the legitimacy of the vehicle you are considering for purchase, contact the St. Louis County Police Department.

For contact information for your nearest Police station or the general information/police lines, please see page 2.

but it also affects society due to raised insurance premiums and the possibility of stolen vehicles being used to commit other crimes.

Car thefts seem to occur with greater frequency when large groups of cars are parked for extended periods of time in places such as shopping centers, colleges, sporting events, movie complexes, and large apartment complexes.

Car thefts can occur anytime – at random and on any day of the week.

On the next page, you will find some tips that you can use to avoid being a victim of an auto theft.

What Not to Do

DO NOT LEAVE YOUR KEYS IN THE CAR! Lock the doors and take the keys with you. A car is usually your second biggest investment. It only takes seconds for someone to start and steal your car. Nearly 20% of all vehicles stolen have the keys in them.

Keep valuables such as phones, purses, and shopping bags out of sight. Lock them in your trunk or store them under your seat. If you cannot replace it, do not leave it in your vehicle.

Park with the front wheels turned sharply to the left or the right. This will prevent a thief from towing your vehicle.

DO NOT BUY A THIEF A FULL TANK OF GAS! When paying for your purchase, take your keys with you. Never leave your vehicle running and unattended at the gas pump. You have just given a thief a full tank of gas for the get-away.

What to Do

Place valuables in your trunk. “Out of sight, out of mind.”

Consider using anti-theft devices such as steering wheel locks, auto alarms, and steering column sleeves.

Do not leave valet keys or spare keys in your vehicle.

Nearly half of all cars stolen with the keys in them were left running unattended.

Pay attention to your surroundings and what is going on around you.

If possible, park your vehicle in a garage instead of in the driveway or on the street.

Lock your car doors as soon as you get in the car.

Always lock your car doors, even if you are only leaving for just a few minutes.

Completely close all of your windows when you park your car.

Always make sure your vehicle has a full tank of gas to eliminate the chance of you having to stop at an unsafe location.

Never leave your title or important paper work inside your car.

Never pick up hitch hikers.

If you have engine trouble, get to a safe, well lit area, and display a “help” sign.

When leaving your vehicle, always remove detachable stereo faces and GPS units.

Anti-Theft Devices

Vehicle Alarms – A car alarm can be a deterrent to some car thieves, however, a professional car thief can often work quickly enough to override the alarm. The type of alarm that disables the car is the most effective alarm. Also, an LED light installed in a visible place on the dashboard will deter amateurs.

Steering Column Sleeves – A steering column sleeve is a metallic device that is placed around the steering column. This is a useful device because many cars can be started by breaking the plastic casing of the steering column and starting the vehicle without a key.

Immobilizers – Thieves can bypass your ignition by “hotwiring” a vehicle. Some immobilizers that can be installed are:

- Keys that contain a computer chip that must be present to start the vehicle
- Kill switches
- Starter, ignition, and fuel disablers

Steering Wheel Locks – These types of devices are a good deterrent to the inexperienced car thief. When properly affixed, the device limits steering wheel movement, making the vehicle nearly impossible to operate.