



## **PROTECTING YOURSELF AGAINST VEHICLE THEFT**

### **TIPS TO PROTECT ANY VEHICLE:**

- Lock it and pocket the key when you leave for a minute or several hours. Close windows all the way and make sure the trunk is locked.
- Control your keys. Never leave an identification tag on your key ring. If your keys are lost or stolen, this could help a thief locate your car and burglarize your home.
- Carry your registration with you rather than leaving it inside your vehicle. Important identification papers or credit cards should be kept securely elsewhere and not in a glove compartment.
- If you have valuable items in your vehicle, keep them in the trunk. If you leave packages, clothes or other items in the car, make sure they're out of sight or covered.
- Park in well-lighted and busy areas. Try not to leave your vehicle in unattended parking lots for long periods of time. If you park in a lot where you must leave the key, leave the ignition key only.
- When buying a car, ask about anti-theft options, such as steering column locks, alarms, switches that interrupt the fuel or electronic systems, and locks for tape decks, batteries, and gas tanks. Many insurance companies offer reduced rates to owners who install security devices.
- Keep your car's VIN (Vehicle Identification Number) and a complete description in a safe place at home. Since 1969, the federal government has required manufacturers to engrave a unique number, the VIN, on all passenger cars in one visible and several hidden locations. One VIN is engraved on a metal plate on the dashboard near the windshield. VINs are registered with the FBI's computerized National Crime Information Center.

### **TIPS TO PROTECT SPECIALIZED VEHICLES:**

#### *Bicycles, Motorcycles and Trail Bikes*

- Park the vehicle out of sight in a garage or basement or use a cover.
- Mark it with an Operation Identification Number recommended by local law enforcement, such as a driver's license number.

- Lock your bicycle with a case-hardened chain or cable and lock, winding the cable through the frame and both wheels and then around a fixed object.
- Use the fork lock found on most street motorcycles. For extra protection, invest in a heavy U-shaped lock made of extremely hard steel that cannot be hacksawed or a case-hardened chain and sturdy padlock.
- Watch out for key numbers! Some motorcycle manufacturers stamp the key number on the lock. With this number, anyone can go to a key maker and have a key cut that will fit perfectly. Many key makers ask for identification. But don't take any chances -- write down your key number and then file it off the lock.

#### *Trucks and Recreational Vehicles*

- Many specialized vehicles don't have VINs and should be marked with an identification number, such as a driver's license.
- Lock up all easy-to-carry items like camping gear before leaving your vehicle.
- Use secured "toppers" or tool boxes. Don't assume a thief can't lift a box because it's heavy.

#### **LICENSE PLATES:**

- License plates can be stolen from cars and used on stolen cars for other crimes. Check your plates when you drive. A few drops of solder on the bolts or blurring of the threads will help safeguard your plates.

#### **HOW TO AVOID BUYING A STOLEN VEHICLE:**

- Verify the VIN plate is intact. Check it with the VIN on the ownership papers.
- Ask the seller about the vehicle's history and past financing and insurance. Check this information with the bank or insurance company.
- Be wary when purchasing used parts for auto repairs -- you could be dealing with a "chop shop" (shop that deals in stolen parts) and indirectly encouraging auto theft.

#### **ACTIONS TO TAKE TODAY:**

1. Get your Neighborhood Watch group to look out for abandoned and suspicious vehicles and educate the members about preventing vehicle theft. Call the Denver Police Department at (720) 913-2000 to report suspicious vehicles or (303) 295-4367 to report abandoned vehicles.
2. Engrave the VIN in several places on the car, such as the door frame or under the hood and trunk lids.
3. Fill in a vital records form for your car and file it away in a safe location. Include year, make, model, color, VIN, license number, identifying marks, insurance company and policy number.