

**THE DENVER CENTER FOR CRIME VICTIMS**  
**PROTECTING YOURSELF AGAINST VEHICLE THEFT**

**Tips to Protect Any Vehicle**

- Always lock your car. Approximately 50% of all vehicles stolen were left unlocked. Close windows all the way; make sure trunk is locked.
- Always take your keys. Never leave them in the car. Nearly 20% of all vehicles stolen had the keys in them. Never hide a second set of keys. It can be found by a thief.
- Park in well-lit, busy areas. Over half of all vehicle thefts occur at night.
- 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.
- Park in attended lots. Auto thieves don't like witnesses and prefer unattended parking lots. If you park in an attended lot, leave only the ignition key. On return, check tires, spare and battery to ensure they are those you had when you parked.
- Never leave your car running, even for a minute. Vehicles are commonly stolen at convenience stores, gas stations, ATMs, etc. Many are stolen on cold mornings when owners leave the vehicle running to warm up. Leaving your car running and unattended is illegal in Colorado.
- If you have a garage, use it. Lock both the garage door and the vehicle.
- Don't leave valuables in plain view. If you have any, keep them in the trunk. If you leave packages, clothes or other items in the car, put them out of sight or cover completely.
- Don't leave registration or title in your car. A thief will use these to sell your stolen car. File the title at home or office. Carry registration in your purse or wallet.
- 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 batteries and gas tanks and how to safeguard accessories. Reduced insurance rates may result.
- Keep your car's VIN (Vehicle ID No.) and a complete description in a safe place at home. The VIN is engraved on all cars in one visible and several hidden locations. Engrave the VIN in other places, the door frame or under the hood and trunk lids. VINs are registered with the FBI's computerized National Crime Information Center.
- Engrave personal ID numbers on any expensive car accessories so a thief will have difficulty disposing of them.
- Fill in a vital records form with year, make, model, color, VIN, license number, identifying marks, insurance company and policy number. File it in a safe location.

## **PROTECTING YOURSELF AGAINST VEHICLE THEFT** (cont.)

### **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 crimes. Check your plates. 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**

- Get your neighbors/Neighborhood Watch group to look out for suspicious people or cars.
- Educate them about preventing auto theft. Call the Denver Police Department to report any possible crime.