

East Division

Neighbourhood Watch Newsletter

Issue 2 February 2015 – Vehicle Crime



Welcome to the second edition of our East Division newsletter. Thank you to all our readers who gave us feedback from the first edition, as a consequence this edition is shorter. We have themed this edition around car crime with some straightforward crime prevention advice. Although the advice may seem obvious, I can assure you that the crime reports we look at every day indicate that as much as up to 50% of vehicle related crimes reported are preventable. This could have the knock on effect of reducing victims, making our communities safer and possibly even decreasing our car insurance premiums in the future. We have not included any graphics/images in this edition as these take up space on the pages.

We welcome Tanya Clark to Kent Police. Tanya has a strong background in community policing having been a KCC rural warden for a number of years. She has taken responsibility for Thanet and Canterbury Districts, and she is already proving to be a real asset to our team.

Alexandra Harrington/Tanya Clark - Volunteer and Watch Liaison Officers, East Division.

Karen Uzzell-Childs (author) and the East Division Neighbourhood Watch volunteers.

Vehicle crime

Statistically the majority of vehicle crime is carried out by opportunistic thieves. The main reasons are proximity (Parking) and model/make of vehicle. You can prevent yourself becoming a potential victim by taking a few simple precautions and making improvements to current security measures.

Could you be a victim?

- Just over 1 in 4 of all vehicles stolen are motorcycles/mopeds
- Nearly 50% of all Kent based offences occur in the North Division, Medway being most vulnerable
- The most common types of vehicles stolen in Kent are:
Ford Focus, Ford Transit, Ford Fiesta, Land Rover Defender, Vauxhall Corsa and Vauxhall Astra
- The recovery rate for lower value vehicles is high but much lower on higher value vehicles.

Source: Kent Police Analysis Team February 2014

Statistics on Car Crime in Kent		
April 2013 (Thefts from cars in Kent)	576	
April 2014 (Thefts from cars in Kent)	629	Rise of 11.8%
April 2013 (Thefts of cars in Kent)	227	
April 2014 (Thefts of cars in Kent)	203	
East Division 2014 (Thefts from cars)	158	
East Division 2014 (Thefts of cars)	48	

Protecting your vehicle

- Photograph your vehicle and make a note of any identifiable marks.
- Consider security marking your vehicle: etch windows and other areas with the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN). Autoglass Repairs offers a vehicle security etching service at service centres nationwide. The police, the AA and leading insurance companies all recommend Autoglass etching system. www.autoglass.co.uk
- Lock all doors and windows every time you leave your vehicle. Use the alarm or immobiliser if fitted. You might also consider locks for the fuel cap and steering wheel. These can be bought from retailers such as Halfords and Argos.
- Make sure your vehicle and contents are insured and your policy is up to date, especially if you have changed anything significant on your vehicle or have a change of use for it.
- If you drive a large vehicle or 4x4 ensure that your catalytic converter is security marked and securely fitted as these are often stolen for their scrap value.
- Don't advertise to thieves; remove all valuables and documents from the vehicle. It's not enough to simply cover something over with a coat.
- Don't hide valuables in the boot or glove compartment as these are the first places a thief will look.
- Even a window opened just an inch could be enough for a car thief to either use a device to open the door from inside or pull a non-electric window off its track.
- Notices to say 'no tools left in van overnight' to be put in the back window.
- If you have a Sat Nav, then as well as taking it with you when you leave the vehicle, you should also remove the suction holder and wipe away marks on the windscreen.
- Never leave the vehicle unattended with the keys in the ignition and/or engine running, even for a few minutes – that's all it can take for a thief to strike.
- Be aware of where you park your vehicle when you are out, for example: secure car parks, note where the CCTV cameras are and where they are facing, and main roads rather than quiet side streets.
- Many vehicle crimes are committed outside the owner's home so ensure that keys are kept somewhere safe indoors. Burglars are often looking for vehicle keys during break-ins.
- If you have a moped or motorbike invest in a good quality disc-lock or attach a bike lock or chain to a ground anchor on your property if possible. If involved in a road traffic collision do not leave the bike by the side of the road but arrange recovery straightaway. Locking systems can be bought from Halfords, with the Oxford range being particularly popular.

Remember a vehicle thief's biggest obstacles are:

- Daylight
- Alarms, immobilisers, steering locks and chains
 - Observant neighbours
 - Security Cameras
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Use of Technology in targeted vehicle crimes

While many vehicle crimes are opportunistic (a thief taking advantage of an open window or unlocked door) there are also occasions when a thief will use more sophisticated technology to gain access and steal a vehicle. This is most often employed for high-value cars that have been specifically targeted.

Source: www.driving.co.uk

Signal Jamming A device transmitting on the same radio frequency as the remote key fobs is used to jam the signal that locks the car. To avoid this trick make sure the indicators flash when you press the lock button and listen for the clunk of locks. Also, physically check the door handles yourself before walking away.

Signal Relaying. Vehicles with keyless systems emit a short-range radio signal which is recognised by the key fob and transmits its own code instructing the vehicle to unlock its doors. A car thief using a wireless transmitter close to a target vehicle could catch its radio transmission. This is then relayed to another device held by an accomplice close to the key fob (probably in the owners pocket at a service station or at home) and fooling the fob into thinking it is next to the car and prompting it to unlock the vehicle. To avoid this happening keep keys out of sight at home or carry them in a shielded wallet or aluminium tin.

Key programming. Once a thief is inside a car they may be able to start it by accessing its diagnostic port. This is something all cars that are at least ten years old will have fitted and is located in the front foot well. The port can be hacked by a simple gadget and used to start the engine. To avoid being a victim fit a lock on the diagnostic port and use additional security, such as a steering-wheel lock.

Close range testing. Some keyless fobs may still be in range of the car when left inside the house, but near enough to the vehicle. Thieves may be able to unlock the door handles but will not be able to drive it away as the key fob must be inside the vehicle to start the engine. Make sure you put your keys in a safe place at home, out of range of the car.

Code grabbing. Used for stealing desirable cars. When the owner locks the car a device captures the signal and then calculates the unlock code. There is some debate about its effectiveness and popularity as a method among car thieves. To avoid this happening it is advisable to lock your car with a key if possible.

App hacking. New technology is allowing owners to connect their cars to their smartphones. An app on the phone could allow the driver to lock and unlock the vehicle. The risk is that a thief could log into the app as the vehicle owner, perhaps by finding or guessing a password correctly. Remember when creating passwords to use a mixture of letters and numbers don't pick obvious things like names or dates of birth.

So Remember:

- Check all doors manually
- Put Keys in a safe place at home
- Be observant of anything or anyone suspicious when you park up
- Use additional security such as sterling locks and non-electric keys

In the event of your vehicle is broken into and/or stolen here is a guide to what you should do as a victim of crime

- Immediately telephone the Police on **101**. **Dial 999** when the crime is still in progress. If you are deaf or speech-impaired text **police** and your message to **60066**. Never try to physically stop someone yourself. It is important to report thefts from vehicles, as when property is recovered it is difficult to trace the owner and return it as the owner has not reported the crime in the first instance.
- Stolen vehicles are often used to commit other offences (such as thefts of petrol from garage forecourts) so report the theft.
- Never accept any attempt at blackmail or "business offers" from criminals in order to regain your vehicle; should an attempt be made to contact you inform the police.
- Contact your insurer straightaway. Your policy may entitle you to a replacement vehicle. If you are paying your insurance by instalments you may still have to pay until the policy is due for renewal. You may also need to make a list of the contents that were in the vehicle. Your insurance may cover valuables up to a certain value, depending on the policy.
- If you had left a handbag, wallet, briefcase or laptop in the vehicle you will need to contact your banks and building societies, also place of work if important documents have been taken. Some motorbike insurance companies will offer additional cover for motorcycle gear and top boxes that are stolen or damaged.
- Should your vehicle be shipped into Europe the United Kingdom works with other European countries under the *'International Convention for the Recovery of Stolen Vehicles'*. Each country within the convention will have an insurance contact that will facilitate the sharing of information and provide a link with local police forces in that country. www.interpol.int
- Tracker systems: A vehicle equipped with a tracking system works with GPS (Global Positioning System). The GPS gets its signals from the satellite and can relay the vehicle's location to a computer or mobile phone app. The Thatcham tracking device is the main one that is currently approved of by insurance firms and the police. www.thatcham.org

You can also find information about tracking systems on the Maidstone and District Neighbourhood watch website www.maidstonenhw.co.uk. Of particular note is the **I Track Direct**. Small and powerful GPS tracking unit; current prices and more information can be found on line at www.ITrackDirect.com

Advice on buying a vehicle

The last thing you would want to happen if you had just spent money on a new vehicle is to find out that you have been duped into buying one that was previously stolen. Here are some tips on how to avoid being caught out.

- Always ask to see proof of the seller's identity and address; this is especially important if it is a private sale rather than an auction or vehicle showroom.
- Check the vehicle's make and model match the details in the log book (V5)
- Check the MOT certificate is up to date and the MOT history matches the details the seller is giving you. Check a car's MOT history for free on GOV.UK at www.gov.uk.
- Check the vehicle doesn't have an outstanding credit agreement or logbook loan. Both the RAC and AA provide this service or look for companies online and in the phonebook.
- Make sure the vehicle's VIN (vehicle identification number) matches the registration document V5 (vehicle log book) and that the DVLA watermark hasn't been altered. You can find the VIN:
 - Stamped on the frame
 - On a manufacturer's VIN plate under the bonnet or fixed to the post between the front and rear doors.
 - On an additional plate fixed securely to the top corner of the dashboard where it can easily be seen through the windscreen.
- Use the DVLA online vehicle enquiry service to find out what information the DVLA holds about a vehicle. You'll need the vehicle's make and registration number. Go to www.gov.uk/checks-when-buying-a-used-car

A recent article of interest appeared in The Mail on Sunday 25th January 2015:

"Police have told motorists to change the home address stored on their satnavs to their local police station because car thieves have been using the devices to find their victims' houses. The guidance comes in reaction to the new tactic of criminals, who spot an expensive car on the street, break into it and use a gadget to hack into its computer system and clone an electronic key. They then check the home address stored on the vehicle's satnav computer map system so they can steal the car from there, where they are less likely to be spotted by CCTV cameras or eyewitnesses. People store their home address in satnavs to use a 'guide me home' option on the gadgets. 'If you interrogate the satnav for the home address, it tells the criminal where you live,' Ian Dowse, a strategic crime reduction officer at Hertfordshire police, told The Mail on Sunday. 'Just put your home address in as the postcode of the police station. Everybody knows where they live.' Motorists are also urged not to leave their keys with valets or car-wash attendants, as they can clone them in seconds and again use information stored on satnavs to discover where the vehicle will be kept at night. Drivers are also told to put lockable devices over the 'onboard diagnostics port' usually found in the front footwell of modern cars."

We hope you find this newsletter of interest. The next one this year will be themed around fraud, telephone, online and personal scams and distractions. The third edition will be produced by summer 2015. If you have any feedback regarding what you would like to see in the newsletters please contact us via the return e mail box – nhw.east.kent@kent.pnn.police.uk Alexandra Harrington and Tanya Clark.