

## Do You Know?

According to the Insurance Information Institute, a motor vehicle - car, SUV, truck, bus, or motorcycle - is stolen in the United States approximately every 45 seconds. In addition, parts of cars, like airbags and catalytic converters (which are stolen for their recycling value) are stolen out of the cars themselves. Cars and car parts stolen in the United States often wind up on overseas markets, making recovery impossible.

And, though armed auto theft represents a small percentage of the incidents, carjacking is a violent crime that can add a dire emotional toll and even bodily harm to the financial loss.

## Prevent motor vehicle theft

There are a number of things that make your vehicle attractive to thieves—including make, model, and the value of certain parts. Know that it's not always the most valuable, the flashiest, or the most expensive car makes and models that are most desirable. So whatever your car, don't make it convenient for would-be criminals. Take these precautionary measures:

- **Keep your doors locked and windows shut** anytime you're not in your car, even for a few minutes.
- **Make valuables invisible.** Don't give thieves more motivation to break into your car. If you have to leave personal property in your car, keep it in the trunk. Even in areas that you think are safe, don't leave a purse or other valuables on the car seat unattended.
- **Park in secure, highly trafficked and well-lit areas.** In public parking garages or areas, stay as close as possible to guard booths or store entrances. Best case, keep your car in a garage and always lock the door to your home garage.
- **Make use of anti-theft devices.** Use a security device like a steering wheel lock or a gearshift column lock—the more difficult it is to take the car, the less likely a would-be thief will target your vehicle. Most new cars include tracking devices, which can help locate a stolen car, but these are available for purchase and installation into older cars, as well.
- **Exploit your vehicle identification (VIN) number.** The VIN number is utilized by a number of law enforcement agencies and databases and insurance databases to make it harder for car thieves to sell a stolen car or its parts.

## Prevent carjacking

Although carjacking is relatively rare, because carjackers are armed when they commit their crimes, it is especially dangerous. Avoid being a carjacking target with these additional precautions:

- **Always have your mobile phone handy**—and charged.
- **Avoid being alone in your vehicle in certain areas**, such as high crime neighborhoods, isolated roads and intersections, and desolate areas of parking lots.
- **Be aware of your surroundings.** Pay special attention to people who seem to be lurking or cars that suspiciously follow you into driveways. Call 911 and use your key fob or other car alarm if you feel a threat.
- **Be wary of how carjackers lure victims.** These include bumping your car, pretending to be stranded motorists, or flashing their lights as if there were something wrong with your car. In each of these scenarios, you might be tempted to pull over—only to have your car taken. Stay inside with the windows shut and the door locked and, if you feel a threat, drive to the nearest police or fire station.
- **Practice safe parking.** Stick to well-lit areas. If you have any doubts about where you parked after the fact, find a security guard to accompany you to your vehicle.
- **Don't sit in your car with the door unlocked** or the windows rolled down.
- **Don't stop at isolated ATMs**, which might put you and your bank accounts as well as your car in danger.

## Prevent Catalytic Converter Theft

Thieves are after the rare metals in the converters, which include: platinum, palladium, and rhodium.

It only takes 30 seconds to a couple of minutes per converter to cut off and remove from a vehicle.

- **Park your vehicle in the garage, within a fenced-in area, or in a lighted area near an entrance.** Thieves often go after the easiest targets. Vehicles parked in a secured, well-lighted area and in view from street are less likely to be targeted. Check fencing to ensure it is secure and not covered with brush or a lot of bushes around it that help hide someone while gaining entrance to the area.
- **Ask for increased sheriff or police patrols through your area/by your location.**
- **Install working cameras that record and store the video.** Post signage that the area has cameras.
- **Consider having your catalytic converter welded onto the vehicle frame.** Often, thieves will simply cut the converter from the exhaust system. Welding the catalytic converter makes it much harder to remove from the vehicle.
- **Consider buying security features such as catalytic converter locks for your vehicle or installing a skid plate or large cover to the bottom of your vehicle.** One such lock has a cable design that surrounds the converter with aircraft grade wire rope that is very difficult to cut, even with the power tools. Many aftermarket items are available at reasonable costs to deter thefts.
- **Engrave your vehicle's VIN number on the catalytic converter.** This will help with the recovery of the catalytic converter if stolen.
- **Paint the converter with a bright high-temperature paint.** Seeing a marked catalytic converter may discourage thieves.

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