

# Vehicle Crime

## Theft of Motor Vehicle

### **DEFINITION: MOTOR VEHICLE**

A "motor vehicle" is a mechanically propelled vehicle made intended or adapted for use on roads.

It should also satisfy the test as to whether or not a reasonable person would say that one of the vehicle's uses would be some general use on the road.

### **DEFINITION: THEFT**

THEFT ACT 1968 SEC 1(1)

"A person is guilty of theft if he dishonestly appropriates property belonging to another with the intention of permanently depriving the other of it; ...".

The terms in this basic definition are amplified in Sections 2-6 of the Theft Act.

Also to be considered in this section, and may well initially be recorded as theft of motor vehicle until the vehicle is recovered:

### **DEFINITION: TAKING MOTOR VEHICLE OR OTHER CONVEYANCE WITHOUT AUTHORITY**

THEFT ACT 1968 SEC 12(1)

"... a person shall be guilty of an offence if, without having the consent of the owner or other lawful authority, he takes any conveyance for his own or another's use or, knowing that any motor vehicle has been taken without such authority, drives it or allows himself to be carried in or on it."

## Theft From Motor Vehicle

### **DEFINITION: MOTOR VEHICLE**

A "motor vehicle" is a mechanically propelled vehicle made intended or adapted for use on roads.

It should also satisfy the test as to whether or not a reasonable person would say that one of the vehicle's uses would be some general use on the road.

### **DEFINITION: THEFT**

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## **Operation Habit**

Operation Habit has been used by Staffordshire Police as a tactic to reduce theft from motor vehicles since 2002.

In its original format it was only used to identify the owners of vulnerable vehicles (insecure vehicles or vehicles containing property on view). The operation was conducted, in the main, by Neighbourhood Beat Officers and PCSOs. Following a PNC check, a standard letter, signed by a Superintendent was sent to the registered owner indicating when and where the vehicle was parked and highlighting the vehicles vulnerability. Basic crime reduction advice was also included.

Since it's inception, Operation Habit has been developed and modified across the County to counter the threat posed not just by vulnerable vehicles but homes/buildings too. Through partnership working with other statutory agencies, the neighbourhood policing teams are now augmented by such officials as parking and street wardens, hotel/motel staff, council and private carpark operators, National and Peak Park Rangers, Crime Prevention Panel members and other volunteers.

The tactic is quite flexible and has been modified to include blanket leafleting of entire carparks with advice about not leaving valuables on display within vehicles (care should be taken when using this approach so as not to draw attention to just vulnerable vehicles), pushing leaflets through the doors of business and domestic properties where vulnerable vehicles are parked on driveways and where high powered expensive vehicles targeted by car key burglars are parked along with pushing leaflets through insecure windows of properties to prevent sneak in burglary.

Operation Habit is traditionally run in vehicle crime "hotspot" areas and as part of predicted seasonal crime trend reduction strategies such as the run up to Christmas. In some areas it is carried out by Neighbourhood teams all year round whenever a vulnerable vehicle is sighted. It has however, been some time since its effectiveness has been properly evaluated.

Notwithstanding the lack of evaluation, Operation Habit can still be a successful crime reduction tactic if implemented properly. The highly personal nature of a letter from the police highlighting the vulnerability of a person's vehicle or home is very impactful. It can be resource intensive, especially when using non police staff to identify vulnerable vehicles as they have no access to PNC. Habit forms have to be collected and collated. Sometimes it is necessary to identify a dedicated person to carry out the PNC checks to identify the vehicles registered keeper and send the letters which can obviously detract from their normal role.

In conclusion, Operation Habit is extremely flexible and impactful. Large operations are resource intensive and may not be sustainable however, under specific circumstances it remains a valid tactic. It is recommended that in depth evaluation of its effectiveness in reducing crime is carried out. Follow up calls to members of the community that receive Habit letters should be considered to gauge to what extent the letter affected their awareness of vulnerability and changed their perceptions.

## **Theft of Number Plates**

Reasons for theft of number plates:

- Drive Offs
- Illegal Parking
- Congestion Charge avoidance
- Speeding charge avoidance
- More serious crime (Robbery, kidnapping, ram raiding etc)

Reduce the rewards:

Traditionally, number plates are stolen for use in further criminality, usually drive offs.

Number plates should ideally be theft resistant.

“SecurePlate” conforms to Sold Secure standards and complies with DVLA criteria for theft resistance. (withstand attack for 3 minutes). If an attempt is made to force the plate it will break into at least 4 pieces rendering it useless.

When number plate theft reported, advice is given that they are replaced with “SecurePlates”.

Anti tamper screws to be provided by the police at high profile local events, in conjunction with Halfords who would fit them.

Contact suppliers of number plates (DVLA Register) to encourage the fitting of “SecurePlate” or tamper proof screws.

Directed media campaign in the local press highlighting the trend and possible repercussions for the IP such as parking tickets, speeding fines etc, whilst offering tamper proof screws at local police stations and other community events.

## Catalytic Converters

It is very difficult to mark cat converters due to the extreme heat (up to 600 degrees). Retainagroup have produced a product which will withstand this heat.

The pack consists of an ultra destruct label together with marking fluid which permanently etches the security code and 24/7 telephone number of the International Security Register (ISR) into the CAT. A window warning label is also available. Even if the thief removes the label, the etched mark remains in place meaning that if the CAT is stolen the identity of the vehicle to which it belongs can be verified immediately by calling the ISR on which vehicle and owner details will have been registered. Each mark comprises a logo (the manufacturer's or "Retainagroup's" International Security Register), a unique seven-digit code and a 24-hour telephone number. Once the mark has been applied, the unique code is recorded with vehicle and owner details on the register and can be verified immediately at any time. The service is free except for the cost of the call and means that thieves stealing a marked and registered converter will put themselves at risk of being apprehended and charged.

Smartwater are presently testing a forensic solution that will still fluoresce and maintain its unique integrity to temperatures of 1000 degrees.



To add to the deterrent factor, signage should be posted on perimeter fencing and small stickers placed on the windows of the vehicle. The average cost of an etching kit is £4 depending on the quantity ordered.

The regional manager for Retaina Group is:  
Roland Worsley  
Register Manager

**RETAINAGROUP Ltd**

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[www.retainagroup.com](http://www.retainagroup.com)

Alternatively, a locking device can be fitted to the catalytic converter. They retail at approximately £120 each and are available from CATLOC:

8, Penhill Industrial Park, Beaumont Road, Banbury OX16 1RW

Tel: 08455 193902

E-Mail: [info@catloc.eu](mailto:info@catloc.eu)



### Forensic Marking

A typical catalytic converter operates at around 500 to 700 deg C. At this temperature, the component within a forensic marking which is fluorescent will burn off. Therefore, there will be no indication that the unit has been forensically marked. For this reason, forensically marking the cat is not a viable option. Forensic grease can be applied to the areas around the catalytic converter (sills, underside of the vehicle etc) which could provide investigative opportunities.

### Why target catalytic converters?

There are tiny amounts of precious metals inside the catalytic converter which makes them so valuable. The price of these valuable metals has increased greatly in recent years.



### What thieves are looking for?

Poorly monitored storage yards or warehouses storing fleet vehicles will allow thieves to steal many parts at once. However, some thieves are quite brazen and may target vehicles which are parked in a public parking lot or even the owner's driveway overnight. Thieves who target catalytic converters can remove them quickly.



### What are the costs?

Catalytic converters are intricate pieces of engineering and given the cost of expensive metal components, their replacement is very costly. This can be compounded by the fact that many vehicles have more than one converter installed. There is no foolproof way to protect your car from this kind of damage, but there are some precautions you can take.



### Diesel theft

Growing fuel prices have led to an increase in the theft of fuel. Every accessible vehicle becomes a potential target. Stolen fuel is not only costly to replace, but may incur additional costs due to missed deliveries and business disruption. In addition to fuel costs, often there is damage caused during the theft, such as damage to locking fuel caps, anti siphon fillers and holes in tanks.

### How do diesel thieves work?

If they can't get into the tank through the fuel cap they may cut fuel lines or drill directly into the tanks. The risk of damage must be considered when implementing any additional security measures.

As with catalytic converter thefts, thieves target poorly monitored storage yards or warehouses storing fleet vehicles. Fuel thieves typically assess opportunities during the day time and strike at night or weekends. Be aware of loiterers and strangers walking through your vehicle parking areas and challenge any suspicious behaviour.

Commercial Vehicle Security

# Catalytic Converter and Diesel Theft

## Information Guide

"It's not just about what's underneath the bonnet!"



Protecting Communities, Targeting Criminals

Over the past year it has become apparent that there has been an increase in the number of catalytic converters that have been stolen from vehicles.

Commercial premises which house a number of commercial vans are being targeted. The exhaust unit and catalytic converters are being removed, sometimes without causing damage to the vehicles or activating any alarms

## 12. Ways to Deter Catalytic Converter and Diesel Theft

### 1) Target Removal

Reduce the amount of fuel left in the vehicles when parked unattended by managing fuel usage. Ideally the vehicles should be left with the minimum amount of fuel and refuelled at the beginning of the working day. Try to avoid full tanks being left during the weekend when the majority of companies are closed.

### 2) Defensive Parking

Park in a highly visible, well lit area. Off-road parking areas such as secure compounds should be used whenever possible. A highly visible parking area should be open to view from passers by or from a monitored CCTV system. Vehicles with a high clearance from the ground make fuel tanks and catalytic converters vulnerable and exposed to attack. Try to park so as to reduce this vulnerability and hinder access to these areas. Park vehicles so fuel tanks are as inaccessible as possible, i.e. parking the vehicle tank to wall or tank to tank if possible. The goal here is to obstruct access underneath the vehicle and near the fuel storage and filler points. At the very least you want to slow the thieves down as much as possible so that your other security measures have time to effectively respond.

### 3) Parking Area

Consider where you are parking. Generally thieves do not like to be seen committing a crime. Consider where the vehicles are parked and would a particular parking pattern allow a better view into the compound from passers by. Make sure your compound does not contain anything that may assist a thief stealing from your vehicles i.e. empty barrels, tubing, wheelbarrows and objects that could be used for climbing perimeter fencing.

### 4) Effective Security Lighting

Good dusk to dawn security lighting makes your vehicles visible to passers by without creating glare. Also consider additional movement sensor lighting which would alert a passer by to an intruder. It may be worth considering covering any lighting with protective caging.

### 5) Monitored CCTV

Recording images of thieves committing crimes that have already taken place can be of limited value. It is more effective to have monitored surveillance where an operator could see a prowler and challenge them via a remote public address system. The operator could also instigate an appropriate response should the prowler refuse to leave the site. This could prevent a crime from being committed and possibly save on costly repair bills and business disruption.

### 6) Security Fencing

Good quality strong perimeter fencing will deter the occasional/opportunistic thief and it should slow down the more organized thieves so that your other security measures such as monitored CCTV can respond. Fencing on its own in a remote location will be vulnerable to attack if not supported by some form of surveillance and monitoring.

### 7) Signage

The fixing of signs highlights the security measures you have put in place and helps deter thieves. They can also remove a potential thief's excuses for being in a particular area or carrying out a specific action. Some examples:

- ▷ Set rules for visitors and remind staff to be vigilant
- ▷ Private property keep out
- ▷ Warning CCTV in operation
- ▷ Security patrols in operation
- ▷ Cat converters and property security marked
- ▷ All vehicles have security devices
- ▷ All vehicles are left with minimum fuel

### 8) Extra Security for Catalytic Converters

If appropriate, converters which are "bolt on" could be secured by welding. This may only act as a deterrent to the lowest level of converter thief armed with a wrench, but no grinding equipment. In some cases this may be enough of a deterrent to help prevent a theft.

### 9) Catalytic Converter Protective Sleeves

Protective coverings and security casings make it much more difficult for a thief to access your converter and remove it.

### 10) Property Marking

Marking a converter with a unique reference will help the police identify the owner should it be located after being stolen. This will not protect against theft, but does assist in returning property and bringing offenders to justice. Any additions or alterations may affect your warranty or guarantee for the vehicle so it is advised you contact your dealer first. Purpose made commercial property marking products are available which will withstand the high temperatures reached on the surface of a converter.

### 11) Locking Fuel Caps and Anti Siphoning Deterrents

There are many products available that can make the fuel tanks on your vehicles less vulnerable. Please be aware these could be damaged if an offender manages to gain access to your vehicle.

### 12) Business Crime Partnerships

If you want to know what crimes are happening in your area and receive information on how to reduce the chance of becoming a victim contact your local Neighbourhood Policing Team.

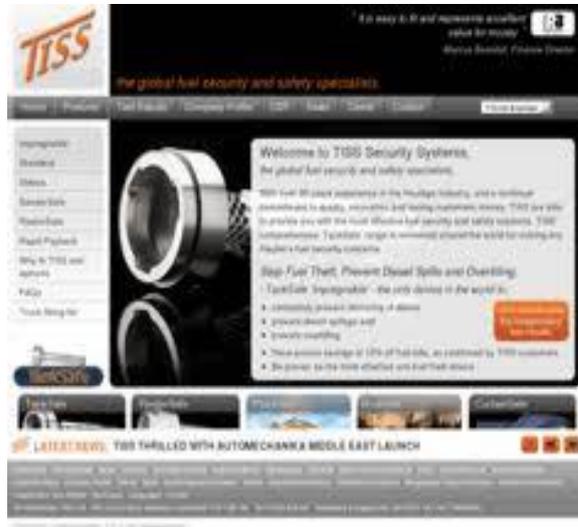
*Any of these security features, when used in isolated locations, having no surveillance or monitoring, could result in damage being caused, as a result of an attack. Prior to carrying out any permanent adaptations or alterations to your vehicle ensure that whatever you intend to do does not affect your warranty or guarantees.*

For further information contact your local Neighbourhood Policing Team by calling 101 or go online at [www.humberside.police.uk](http://www.humberside.police.uk).

For Police approved security products and installers go to [www.securebydesign.com/companies/index.aspx](http://www.securebydesign.com/companies/index.aspx)

## Fuel Theft

Fuel theft from both commercial vehicles and cars is expected to increase in line with the soaring cost of fuel.



Anti siphon devices are readily available and retail at approximately £50 each. These are effective at preventing the opportunist thief, however, fitting an anti syphon device could lead to the fuel tank being punctured which would be much more expensive to replace than the fuel.

TISS Ltd | 330 Lytham Road, Blackpool,  
Lancashire, FY4 1DW - UK

Telephone: 0044 (0) 1253 400 401

## Fuel Tank Alarms

These can be fitted by the operator or, in the case of more sophisticated systems, by the supplier.



The Vehicle Fuel Theft alarm will monitor the tank while the vehicle is parked and generate attention by triggering the horn or siren and flashing the vehicle indicators when fuel tank interference has been detected.

The dedicated GSM module designed exclusively for the Fuel Tank Alarm system will enable alerts to be sent via text of any problem with the fuel tank of the vehicle.

By plugging in the GSM module, text messages can be sent from the alarm system directly to up to 3 numbers, this can be the driver, head office, monitoring station and others as needed.

GSM Secure Ltd

0161 402 3095

Fax: 0870 235 1366

Email: [sales@gsm-secure.co.uk](mailto:sales@gsm-secure.co.uk)

## ParkMark

The Park Mark® Safer Parking Scheme is an initiative of the Associations of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and is aimed at reducing both crime and the fear of crime in parking facilities.

The scheme is run on behalf of ACPO by The British Parking Association (BPA)

Safer Parking status, Park Mark®, is awarded to parking facilities that have met the requirements of a risk assessment conducted by the police.

Award holders include car parks in shopping centres, hospitals, hotels, and train stations

Car parks have been assessed to ensure that they are properly managed and maintained.

The regional manager for ParkMark is:

Michael Gardner

Safer Parking Scheme Development Manager

The Midlands, Oxfordshire and West Berkshire Region

British Parking Association



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Web: [www.britishparking.co.uk](http://www.britishparking.co.uk)

Park Mark : [www.parkmark.co.uk](http://www.parkmark.co.uk)

Who can help?

Partners	What can they contribute?	What's in it for them?	Possible Constraints	Examples
Car park operators and managers	Details of crime, including unreported crime; Feedback on customer perspective; Better design and management (Secure Car Parks).	Competitive edge; Car crime, fear of crime and crime-related damage leads to loss of revenue.	Concern not to fuel fear of crime/ draw attention to the problem; Cost of security improvements.	Carlisle extended the duties of staff to include reporting of suspicious incidents. In Stevenage, a private company runs a car valeting scheme in car parks in conjunction with the borough council. Police in Blackpool provide car park security managers with photos of local offenders, so that they, and ticket checkers, can be on the alert.
Crimestoppers	Stop Motor crime And Ring Today (SMART) campaign;	Targeted publicity to encourage crime reporting; Community Intelligence. Increased coverage/ promotion of campaign. Help in locating/ targeting unlicensed vehicles;		

		Increased revenues from vehicle excise licenses.		
DVLA	Action to immobilise, remove & dispose of unlicensed vehicles, some of which may be stolen or used in commission of other crimes.	Help in locating/targeting unlicensed vehicles; Increased revenues from vehicle excise licenses.	Potential scale of the task	<p>Several areas operate vehicle clamping and removal schemes in association with DVLA. E.g., in Skelmersdale police, council workers and DVLA enforcement officers worked together to locate then clamp and remove unlicensed vehicles.</p> <p>With help from DVLA, Northumbria police traced the addresses to which fraudulent V5 Vehicle Registration Documents had been issued for ringed vehicles later recovered.</p>
Health Authorities and Trusts	Secure car parks. Information on numbers of vehicle-related incidents reported as part of risk management system.	Fulfilling requirements of NHS Executive Controls Assurance Standard. Security Management; Crime a contributory factor in stress-	Other priorities Levels of theft may not be felt to justify Secured Car Park status.	

		related illness; A & E cases arising from stolen vehicles and joyriding in particular when involved in accidents; Thefts in hospital car parks; Impact on staff		
HMRC/ JobCentre Plus	Intelligence/ joint enforcement	More effective enforcement	Competing priorities; Constraints on information sharing	West Midlands Police worked with the Fire Service, Benefits Agency, HMRC, and Trading Standards to investigate a multi-occupied factory premises.
Insurers and finance houses	Encouragement/ incentives to owners to improve vehicle security. responsible road	Fewer claims	Action by one insurer may benefit all: no competitive advantage	A 10 week special operation (Operation Phoenix) to examine a high proportion of vehicles written off by insurers then re-registered, led to Merseyside Police recovering 18 stolen vehicles worth at least £100,000.
Local	Local Authority	Value for money.		Sandwell MBC have introduced a Safedrive

Authority business/ contracts services	vehicle fleet management			programme for MBC vehicles. The scheme aims to improve security of all Local Authority vehicles by installation of additional security devices, advice on safe parking, risk assessment of problem sites, additional training for drivers involved in several claims, requirement that departments bear the cost of accidents/incidents involving fleet vehicles.
Local Education Authority/ schools	Safe driving programmes in schools; Alternative education/ vocational qualifications; Targeted work with persistent truants and excluded pupils.	Support from others to cater for/ engage disaffected young people; Help in meeting literacy/ numeracy etc targets; Links with citizenship programmes etc.; Value for money.	Pressure on staff and on the curriculum; Pressure to raise academic standards.	Several forces have made use of the Impact Roadshow, an interactive programme developed by Avon & Somerset Constabulary in response to high levels of involvement in vehicle related offending and risk taking amongst young people. The programme was designed for use with year 10 pupils (ages 14-15) but has been used successfully with a range of audiences aged 11-25.
Local Authority Fire and Rescue	Initiatives to reduce and respond to vehicle arson	Reduction in calls, value for money		Kent Fire Brigade pass details of vehicle fire incidents to the police. Where possible, they record the VRM, chassis number or VIN number; the make, model, colour; whether the engine and/or interior are intact and any other interesting information. This information is used to establish whether a vehicle is stolen and warrants further

				<p>investigation. This is one of a series of tactical interventions which, when taken together, are designed to increase detections through recovery and forensic examination of stolen vehicles.</p> <p>In Northumbria, joint police/ fire service initiative to tackle arson black spots whereby abandoned vehicles are dealt with quickly before they are subject to an arson attack or vandalism. The aim of this pilot initiative is to remove and impound abandoned vehicles before they are attacked or set alight. The owner of the vehicle is then traced. The pilot scheme led to a 10% reduction in vehicle fires in 12 months.</p>
Local Authority Housing/ Housing Association	Effective neighbourhood design and management; Role for area managers & neighbourhood wardens in providing information/ identifying and dealing with nuisance/ abandoned vehicles.	Housing in areas with less crime is easier to let, with more rent income; Residents often press for action; Value for money.	Pressure for quick wins at the cost of long term benefits.	Solihull are examining a scheme to exclude people convicted of vehicle crime from Local Authority garages.

<p>Local Authority Leisure/ Cultural services</p>	<p>Raising awareness; Action to cut crime in hot spots e.g. tourist sites, leisure centres; Role for Ranger services in giving advice/ encouraging reporting/ gathering information; Targeted outreach activities.</p>	<p>Vehicle crime can deter visitors/ cut use of leisure facilities; Value for money.</p>	<p>Concern not to fuel fear crime/ draw attention to the problem.</p>	
<p>Local Authority Planning</p>	<p>Can require a crime impact analysis in any planning</p>	<p>Better planned neighbourhoods have less crime</p>		<p>The Bromsgrove crime reduction strategy includes a commitment to developing supplementary application; Crime prevention guidelines for developers; Design improvements when neighbourhoods are redeveloped. less crime; Value for money; Commitment in recent comprehensive spending review to require local authorities to screen planning applications for their crime implications with help from the police.</p>

				or major redevelopments planning guidance aimed at reducing vehicle crime.
Local Authority Regeneration	Vehicle crime reduction measures as part of wider strategies for regeneration/ neighbourhood renewal.	Less crime will help to foster neighbourhood renewal; Value for money.		
Local Authority Roads and highways	Traffic/ parking regulation and management in vehicle crime spots (e.g. double yellow lines to control parking); Car park security; Motor cycle security provision; Road safety programmes; Driver retraining; Lighting	help increase use of public transport; Fewer accidents involving stolen vehicles Support in achieving casualty reduction targets; Value for money.	Focus has tended to be on meeting targets for cutting road accidents; Few links in the past with community safety; Pressure on budgets.	

	improvements.			
Local Authority Transport	More secure car parks	Safer car parks at interchanges may encourage use of public transport; Information from other partners may help identify unsafe operators; Value for money.		Adoption of ParkMark Scheme.

Standard Vehicle Security Advice:

- Always lock the vehicle, closing all windows, doors and the sun roof
- When locking the vehicle, always check it's locked by pulling the doors as thieves use wireless jammers to prevent cars from locking
- Park in a well-lit area leaving the vehicle in a garage overnight, where possible
- Remove all valuables, including mobile phones, Sat. Nav. systems and cradles, lap tops, bags, coins and tools. Always clean-off any tell-tale 'Sat. Nav' sticker marks visible on windscreens
- Never leave a vehicle unattended with the keys in it, even if just using the ATM, defrosting the windscreen or buying a newspaper
- Remember to keep car keys out of sight at home – away from windows, doors and letterboxes.
- Security mark your satnav. Always take them with you and remove the cradle from the windscreen or dashboard.
- Etch, alarm or clamp the catalytic convertor.
- If you have alloy wheels, secure them with locking wheel nuts.
- Fit tamper proof screws to your number plates or replace the plates with theft proof models