



VEHICLE CRIME

WHEELS

Alloy wheels are always attractive to a thief because of their high value. You can secure your wheels by using locking wheel nuts. Locking wheel nuts will also prevent the theft of 'run-on-flat' tyres. Cable ties won't prevent your wheel trims from being stolen but they are a good deterrent because they will slow an offender down.

INDEX PLATES

Index plates are often stolen to 'disguise' another vehicle in the execution of a crime. You can secure your plates by removing the original screws

and replacing them with clutch-head screws. These are screws that can only be turned clockwise and you need a drill to remove them. Stick-on plates are never a good idea – they can be removed quickly and quietly. Visit www.secureplate.com for details on tamper-proof index plates. Many garages offer to fit anti-theft plates: please check the product is dvlA-approved and bears the 'Sold Secure' logo. Many non-tested products are proving not to work effectively.



LOCKS

If you have a steering wheel lock, then use it. There are many types on the

market; the most popular are the 'thread through' style and the steering wheel shields. Make sure any product bought has the 'Sold Secure' brand of approval. You can also buy locking wheel clamps – these are especially useful if the vehicle is to be left unattended for a long period (eg, while you are on holiday).

There are now a number of strong boxes that have been designed to fit into the boot of a car or the back of a van. These are particularly useful if you need to transport tools or expensive items as part of your work. If you need to transport tools and equipment as part of your job, empty your vehicle every evening. It is also worth having a sign in your vehicle that states no tools are left in it overnight.

PROPERTY MARKING

Property marking cannot prevent your goods from being stolen but it is a very good deterrent as it is difficult to sell on stolen property that has been marked. It also allows the police to return recovered stolen goods to their rightful owner. Mark your property with your house/flat number and postcode. If your property has a name, use the first 3 letters instead of the house number. Use a UV pen to invisibly mark items such as mobile phones, audio-visual equipment, cameras, etc. Other products on the market are SmartWater and microdot tagging systems. Consider etching your windows and alloy wheels.

ALARMS

Most new cars are fitted with an alarm and immobiliser as standard. However, it is possible to install a higher specification alarm if necessary. These alarms can also be installed in caravans. Please check the alarm you buy has the 'Sold Secure' seal of approval.

STEREOS

If you can remove the fascia of your stereo, do so. This is the best way to make your stereo undesirable. You can also secure your stereo by replacing the fixing screws with small gauge clutch-head screws. It makes sense to property mark your stereo and other in-car gadgets, too.

SATELLITE NAVIGATION AND OTHER GPS BASED DEVICES

Some vehicles now have integrated satellite navigation systems but many people buy the stand-alone units that fit to the window on cradle with a plastic sucker pad. If you use one of these items, it is essential you not only remove the device but also the cradle and wipe the sucker ring mark off the glass. Thieves will be looking for tell-tale signs of in-car gadgets as they are small enough to pocket and fetch a good price. Remember to check your insurance details – some home contents policies do not cover satellite navigation systems as they are classed as 'vehicle accessories'.

YOUR CAR KEYS

Sometimes houses are burgled specifically to get the keys to a desirable vehicle parked on the drive. When at home, keep your keys out of the line of vision from doors, letter boxes and windows. Don't store them in an obvious place, like a drawer in the hallway table or kitchen, or a hook on the back of the door.

PRIVATE PARKING

If you have a garage, clear it out and park the car in it – this will help prevent your car being specifically targeted if it is a desirable make and model. If you own a motorcycle, consider installing a ground anchor and use a sturdy chain and padlock. You can reinforce the security of the garage door by fitting a 'garage defender' – this prevents the up-and-over door from being raised. Garage windows can be obscured with frosted adhesive vinyl – if a burglar can't see in, it reduces the temptation to break in. If you can park on a driveway, consider fitting a fold-down or telescopic post. If you own a caravan or trailer, consider installing a hitchlock and post.

Make sure the area where you park your car is well-lit. If the parking area is on private property, you can use a domestic CCTV system.

Always empty your vehicle of property and remove the stereo fascia when you park up outside your home.

PUBLIC CAR PARKS

Many multi-storey car parks now have 'Park Mark' status. This means they have been built or refurbished with crime reduction in mind. They will have signage displaying their status at the entrances. However, it is always sensible to remove temptation and clear your vehicle when you park.

CATALYTIC CONVERTERS

Acid etching kits are now available on the market to security mark your catalytic converter, and you can also use an electric etching tool.

Whilst Bedfordshire Police cannot promote or endorse any particular product or service, we do have an obligation to make the public aware of emerging crime reduction measures.

Remember to register your property on www.immobilise.com