



TIPS & PREVENTION

Theft Prevention Programs, Initiatives, and Enforcement Activities

Nearly half of vehicle theft is due to driver error, which includes leaving vehicle doors unlocked and leaving keys in the ignition or on the seats.

There are various State and Federal prevention programs, initiatives, and enforcement activities designed to help counter vehicle theft. Some include:

- **DOT Federal Parts-Marking and Antitheft Device Regulation:** NHTSA has published many antitheft regulations to help in the reduction of vehicle theft and to help inform the public about NHTSA's important vehicle theft prevention policies. These include a regulation that encourages manufacturer installation of passive antitheft devices as standard equipment in factory-delivered motor vehicles and a regulation that requires motor vehicle manufacturers to mark original equipment and replacement parts of passenger motor vehicles with a vehicle identification number. **To learn more about NHTSA's Vehicle Theft Prevention regulations, please visit [NHTSA.gov/theft](https://www.nhtsa.gov/theft).**
- **National Motor Vehicle Title Information System:** Overseen by the Department of Justice, NMVTIS is designed to protect consumers from fraud and unsafe vehicles and to keep stolen vehicles from being re-sold. NMVTIS also assists States and law enforcement in deterring and preventing title fraud and other crimes. **To learn more about NMVTIS, please visit [www.NMVTIS.gov/index.html](https://www.nmvtis.gov/index.html).**
- **Watch Your Car-type Programs:** Programs such as Watch Your Car provide decals for motor vehicle owners to voluntarily display on their vehicles to alert police that their vehicles are not normally driven from 1 a.m. to 5 a.m. Motorists may also choose to display another decal to signify that their vehicles are not normally driven across international land borders or in the proximity of ports of entry.
- **Bait Vehicles:** Law enforcement agencies plant decoy vehicles in high-crime areas to capture vehicle thieves. When the thief takes off with the stolen vehicle, the police are able to disable the vehicle and capture the thief.
- **Free Window Etching:** Law enforcement agencies sometimes hold free window etching events where they permanently etch VINs on windows, making it costly for thieves to mask the identity of the vehicle and easier for these agencies to trace and recover a stolen vehicle.
- **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Law enforcement agencies sometimes put together public awareness campaigns for vehicle owners to learn about the importance of using an alarm system, locking windows and doors, and having a visual deterrent like a steering-wheel lock. Other activities that increase awareness include distribution of free steering-wheel locks at public safety fairs, block-watch parties and community events.

The estimated total value of vehicles stolen nationwide is almost \$4.1 billion.

- **The Insurance Industry:** Some insurance companies offer rate reductions for vehicles equipped with antitheft devices, as well as for owners who VIN-etch their windows/glass and garage their vehicles. Other insurance companies advertise cash reward programs for information leading to vehicle recovery and the arrest and conviction of motor vehicle criminals. The insurance industry also works closely with local, State, and national law enforcement to report and prosecute fraud in auto theft, provide bait cars to law enforcement in high-theft areas, and monitor auctions for suspicious buyers who bid for salvage that will be dismantled for parts.

For more information on local initiatives, contact your local police department, theft prevention authority, or insurance company to see if any of these theft prevention initiatives are active in your area. For more information on Federal program initiatives, contact NHTSA or the Department of Justice.

In 2013, there were nearly 700,000 motor vehicles reported stolen in the United States.

Be Smart—Don't Hand Thieves the Key

Beat the thieves at their own game. Follow these simple steps to help safeguard your vehicle:

Protect Your Vehicle

There are several different types of antitheft systems and devices designed to make vehicles more difficult to steal and—in the event they are stolen—easier to trace and recover. Here's how some of them work:

- **Audible and Visible Devices:** Audible devices deter theft by emitting sound that brings attention to an unauthorized attempt to steal or enter your vehicle, such as a horn alarm. Visible devices are devices that create a visual threat/warning/deterrence to a potential thief—such as those created by the use of steering-wheel, brake, and wheel locks—as well as theft-deterrent decals, flashing lights, and window etching.
- **Immobilizing-Type Devices:** Immobilizing-type devices are electronic devices that prevent thieves from bypassing your vehicle's ignition system and hot-wiring the vehicle. Some electronic devices incorporate computer chips in ignition keys. Other immobilizer-type devices disable the flow of electricity or fuel to the engine, such as fuel cut-off devices, kill switches, and starter, ignition, and fuel disablers.
- **Vehicle Recovery Systems:** A vehicle thief will look for any way to steal your vehicle, and sometimes no matter what you do to prevent or deter vehicle theft, it can still happen. Some vehicle manufacturers are installing devices that use electronic transmission technology to aid in the recovery of your vehicle in the event that it has been stolen. This electronic transmission technology has the potential to also help law enforcement reveal the location of other stolen vehicles—and possibly catch the thief in the act.

