

# VEHICLE SECURITY

This leaflet is prepared by The Caravan Club as part of its free information service to members. The contents are believed correct at date of publication, but the current position may be checked with The Club's Information Office. The Club does not endorse the listed products and you should satisfy yourself as to their suitability. As always check that the installation of an after-market accessory does not invalidate your Warranty.

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## 1. General

According to the British Crime Survey 2007/08 vehicle related theft has fallen 66% since 1995. The risk of having your vehicle stolen is very low, about once in every 107 years. However, vehicle crime still accounts for over one-fifth of all crimes recorded by the police.

The Car Theft Index 2006 (the latest available) shows that:

- older cars are at highest risk of being stolen
- cars more than 9 years old account for nearly two-thirds of all cars stolen
- new cars are at least risk of being stolen – those aged 0-3 years old account for less than 11% of stolen cars
- sophisticated security measures now fitted as standard to new cars mean some criminals are turning to other methods to steal vehicles (for example taking the keys)
- cars are less likely to be stolen if they have a car alarm or some kind of immobiliser
- around 68% of vehicle crimes occur around the home. The clear message to motorists is to remember to remove all possessions from their cars when they park them at or around home, particularly at night
- in 2005, 199,531 cars were stolen in England, Scotland and Wales. This is 38,394 fewer thefts than in 2004

It also shows that People Carriers and 4x4s had the least risk of theft, with only 4 stolen per 1,000 registered. Large saloons had the next lowest risk of theft, with 6 stolen per 1,000 registered. Cars that were between 12 and 14 years old (registered between 1991 and 1993) faced the greatest risk of being stolen, with a theft rate of 22 cars per 1,000 registered. Cars registered between 2003 and 2005 had the lowest risk of theft, with 3 stolen per 1,000 registered.

Theft from a motor caravan is potentially more likely than from a car, due to its contents - probably including a television, camera and portable radio, amongst other personal possessions. Research has also discovered that would-be thieves could be particularly deterred by fitting an alarm. When offenders were questioned, 83% said they would not try to steal a car if they knew it was so equipped, whilst in a separate study the majority said they would run off if an alarm activated. However, a determined thief, given sufficient time, can remove or disable almost any alarm and the general aim is to persuade the thief to abandon the attempt.

## **2. Alarms**

Some car alarms are portable types that sit on the dashboard or in the motor caravan body and detect an intruder by using infra red sensors, or by the change in air pressure associated with a smashed window or open door. Although these are generally inexpensive and easy to install, they are also quick and easy to remove by throwing over a hedge! Those relying on air pressure can be prone to false alarms on a windy day if air vents are nearby or roof vents or sunroofs open. More sophisticated alarms use ultrasonic sensing, filling the car interior with high-frequency sound waves which activate the siren if disturbed. Microwave sensing is similar, but more controllable and can be 'focused' over a set area, and therefore could be suitable for soft-top cars, where wind-induced movement of the hood could activate ultrasonic sensors, and motor caravans, where larger air vents could trigger false alarms. Movement or shock sensors would detect jacking up to remove wheels, climbing into coach built body etc. but must be set up so as not to cause false alarms with gentle wind rocking.

Voltage sensors can detect activation of any courtesy lights if door or boot is opened. However, if you have an electric fan that could run after the engine is switched off, make sure this will not activate the alarm.

All car manufacturers are now offering some form of security, eg an alarm and/or immobiliser, as standard with their models. Beware the apparent security of some of these systems, as most professional thieves know where they are and how they work. Although the base vehicles on which motor caravans are built are showing improvements in security devices, eg better door locks, the habitation area has a long way to go and generally provides no greater security than a trailer caravan. In terms of preventing access to the vehicle, the efforts of the base vehicle manufacturers are frequently nullified by the relatively poor security of the conversion, particularly in the case of coachbuilts. In order to protect not just the car or motor caravan, but the contents as well, a good quality alarm should be considered. Most alarms should be fitted by a competent auto-electrician - many companies installing car radios also fit alarms. Some are suitable for DIY fitting if you have some auto-electrical knowledge - consult the manufacturer. Consider that, if DIY fitting instructions are readily available identifying connection points etc, the professional thief will probably have a set too. To find a competent alarm/immobiliser installer, contact the Vehicle Systems Installation Board on 01708 340911, or [www.vsib.co.uk](http://www.vsib.co.uk).

## **3. Connection to caravan**

If you are towing, tell your installer that power will be drawn from the 12S and 12N sockets. This could affect the operation of some types of alarm which rely on detecting a voltage change in the car wiring. After fitting, make sure everything works properly with the caravan connected.

#### **4. Immobilisers**

An electronic immobiliser has been a required fitment on all new cars sold in the UK since October 1998, and manufacturers of all common base vehicles for motor caravans now fit an engine immobiliser as standard. Whilst these will not protect your car or motor caravan contents, they should stop the vehicle from being driven away. They generally do this by preventing the engine from being started, usually in a variety of ways to fool the would-be thief. Some interrupt the fuel supply to the vehicle, so once the fuel in the line is used up the engine stops - fuel injected vehicles will not start at all. Others have 'secret' points that need to be touched simultaneously before the vehicle will start, while many cut the ignition circuit in one or more places.

#### **5. Tracking/Registration Systems**

Tracking systems enable a vehicle to be located after it has been stolen, generally using satellite technology, although the earliest systems used radio signals.

There are various types of system available, however:

- Systems designed primarily for cars eg 'Tracker' (information telephone number 0500 090909, or website [www.tracker.co.uk](http://www.tracker.co.uk)). These may not ideally suit use in motor caravans, since their power consumption may be too high for use during periods of storage; however, they would suit motor caravans which are in everyday use.
- Systems designed primarily for caravan use, especially in terms of issues like power consumption and hence also tend to suit motor caravans. The systems detailed in the table on page 8 have passed the requirements of the Sold Secure standard for such products, confirming their suitability for caravan use, their durability and resistance to attack etc. These are the only systems that we consider to have a proven level of performance for vehicles which spend significant period in storage.
- 'Monitored' systems, where any alarm is alerted to a monitoring centre, who can then contact the owner and/or the police.
- 'Unmonitored' systems, which usually alert the owner directly, often by mobile phone text messages.

In all cases, the equipment is relatively expensive, and monitored systems additionally incur a significant annual fee for the monitoring service.

It is important to recognise that the effectiveness of all tracking systems depends on being able to not only locate but also to recover the stolen vehicle. This generally requires police involvement, although it is vital to note that the responsibility for recovering a vehicle actually rests with its owner (or any third party contracted by them), and the police are not obliged to carry out recovery work. Current police policy does not guarantee a response to a stolen vehicle report via a tracking system. Forces may respond to reports alerted via a legitimate, accredited monitoring centre, but are far less likely to respond to an alert made directly to the owner. When choosing a tracking system, ask the provider for details of any monitoring centre used, and look for characteristics like the existence of a police-allocated Unique Reference Number and ideally compliance with the Association of Chief Police Officers and Home Officer Guidance to Companies on Police Policy relating to Stolen Vehicle Tracking Systems.

Tracking systems are building a reputation for themselves as being an effective way of recovering stolen vehicles. Often recovery is very rapid, and before any significant harm has been done to the vehicle. The proliferation of systems, and evolving technology has meant that insurance companies can still be reticent about offering premium discounts when such systems are fitted. If considering a tracking system, do not assume that all insurers will recognise it as justifying a discount.

The UK motor caravan industry and HPI have joined forces to create MINDER, a vehicle security and registration system to help protect against and combat theft and fraud. Most UK built motor caravans sold since 2001 carry a unique Motorhome Identification Number (MIN), a Vehicle Identification Number and their Vehicle Registration Mark (VRM). This gives a greater all round level of security to owners and enables future buyers to identify the vehicle and check its history. In addition, to ensure accurate identification, each motor caravan has a 'hidden' electronic tag and visible etching of the MIN number, as well as a permanent warning sticker. For further information contact MINDER on 01722 435478 or email [minder.uk@hpi.co.uk](mailto:minder.uk@hpi.co.uk).

## **6. Steering Wheel Clamps**

These prevent the steering wheel from being turned, and are a highly visible deterrent to vehicle theft, although obviously cannot protect the vehicle contents. Some cheap models available are quite easy to overcome by cutting or smashing and offer little resistance to a professional thief. Price is not always an indication of quality; nor security. The Autolok 2000 Steering Wheel Shield is certified Sold Secure, but is a relatively inexpensive deterrent.

## **7. Handbrake Clamp**

This generally clamps between handbrake and gear lever and is available in several sizes to fit most cars, but not motor caravans (unless car-derived).

## **8. Wheel Clamps**

A variety of wheel clamps are available on the market, and by using common-sense one can generally distinguish between those that would drop off at the sight of a hacksaw or scaffolding pole, and those which would take a great deal of effort to remove. Be wary of those which could be removed by simple deflation of the tyre. What is harder to judge is the quality of lock which is fitted. For all round confidence in such products, look for approval markings by organisations such as Sold Secure.

## **9. Etching**

Arrange to have your vehicle's registration number etched onto all glass services – including the headlamps. Or you could use the last 7 digits of the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN), or some other unique identifying number linked to a recognised database which keeps to the Loss Prevention Council (LCP) standards 1224 (requirement for secure database management for use in asset marking systems) and 1225 (specification for asset marking systems).

## **10. Insurance Companies**

It is often worth contacting your car or motor caravan insurer, who may have special deals arranged with suppliers of security systems. Not only might this arrangement save you money on the security product itself, but the insurer may also offer a premium discount once the device is fitted.

## **11. HPI**

For buyers of used cars, tales of insurance write-offs, stolen vehicles and HP debts abound. Buyers are strongly advised to check with HPI who, for a fee of £24.99 by telephone or £19.99 via the internet, can say if the vehicle has suffered major accident damage, has money owing on it, is recorded stolen or at risk from theft, or has had a change of registration plate. The number to call is 0845 3008905, lines are open 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm Saturday and 10am to 5pm Sunday. The website address is [www.hpicheck.com](http://www.hpicheck.com).

## **12. Sold Secure**



Sold Secure, the Home Office and Police inspired and supported attack test house, is a fully accredited UK based organisation testing the effectiveness of vehicle, caravan and trailer security devices. A division of the Master Locksmiths' Association, Sold Secure has developed specifications to keep up to date with the methods used by thieves, and increasing numbers of caravan insurance companies fully recognise the work done by Sold Secure. Those devices in the table on Pages 7 and 8 are Sold Secure recognised. Products tested to the 'Silver' standard offer theft resistance aimed at preventing determined attacks. Products tested to the 'Gold' standard offer theft resistance aimed at preventing dedicated attacks. Current information on products is available on the Sold Secure website: [www.soldsecure.com](http://www.soldsecure.com), or by phone on 01327 264687

## **13. Insurance Approval (Thatcham)**

The Motor Insurance Repair Research Centre (MIRRC) at Thatcham in Berkshire is responsible for approving alarms and immobilisers which have met their test standards. Systems judged to comply with the criteria are listed subject to a review after twelve calendar months. Consumers can obtain current information by telephoning Thatcham's Helpline on 0870 5502006, or from their website: [www.thatcham.org](http://www.thatcham.org).

#### 14. **Home Office Advice**

The 'Steer Clear' booklets give good general advice, see their website:

[www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/SteerClearCar06](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/SteerClearCar06), while the 'Car Theft Index' enables you to look up your model of car to see how vulnerable it is, see [www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/car-theft-index](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/car-theft-index) .

<b>PRODUCT (Approximate cost)</b>	<b>TYPE OF DEVICE</b>	<b>MANUFACTURER/ SUPPLIER</b>
<b>MECHANICAL DEVICES</b>		
<b>OPTI 90/670 HD SQUARE TELESCOPIC POST</b> £268 <i>Gold</i>	<b>SECURITY POST</b>	<b>ATG ACCESS</b> 08456 757574 <a href="http://www.atgaccess.com">www.atgaccess.com</a>
<b>GEARLOCK 45 (MUL T LOCK)</b> £70 plus VAT <i>Gold</i>	<b>GEAR LOCK</b>	<b>MUL T LOCK (UK) LTD</b> 01536 461111 <a href="http://www.mul-t-lock.com">www.mul-t-lock.com</a>
<b>BULLDOG TITAN CLAMP</b> £105 - £120 <i>Gold</i>	<b>WHEEL CLAMP CAN BE USED ON CARAVANS , TRAILERS AND CARS</b>	<b>BULLDOG SECURITY PRODUCTS</b> 01952 728171 <a href="http://www.bulldogsecure.com">www.bulldogsecure.com</a>
<b>BULLDOG EUROCLAMP 4X4SS</b> £65 - £70 <i>Gold</i>	<b>MOTORHOME WHEEL CLAMP</b>	“
<b>CENTAUR CA2000</b> £155 - £165 <b>CENTAUR COMMERCIAL CA2000C</b> £165 - £175 <i>Gold</i>	<b>WHEEL CLAMP</b>	“
<b>DISKLOK</b> £69.99 - £109.99 <i>Gold</i>	<b>STEERING WHEEL SHIELD</b>	<b>DISKLOK UK</b> 01257 795100 <a href="http://www.disklokuk.com">www.disklokuk.com</a>
<b>SAS LOCKING WHEEL BOLTS</b> Set of 2 - £22 Set of 4 - £32	<b>LOCKING WHEEL BOLTS</b>	<b>SAS PRODUCTS LTD</b> 0117 937 4737 <a href="http://www.sasproducts.com">www.sasproducts.com</a>
<b>MILENCO LOCKING WHEEL NUTS</b> Set of 4 for 15” - £39.42 Set of 4 for 16” - £39.42 Set of 6 for 16” - £60.54 <i>Gold</i>	<b>LOCKING WHEEL NUTS</b>	<b>MILENCO LTD</b> 01908 220102 <a href="http://www.milenco.com">www.milenco.com</a>
<b>AUTOLOK 2000</b> £69.99 <i>Gold</i>	<b>STEERING WHEEL SHIELD</b>	<b>AUTOLOK SECURITY PRODUCTS LTD</b> 0161 624 8171 <a href="http://www.autelok.co.uk">www.autelok.co.uk</a>
<b>TORC GROUND ANCHOR</b> £59.95 <i>Gold</i>	<b>GROUND ANCHOR</b>	<b>PRAGMESIS LTD</b> 01827 286267 <a href="http://www.torc-anchors.com">www.torc-anchors.com</a>
<b>PROTECTOR 16mm CHAIN</b> £78.25 (2m) £110.25 (3m) <i>Gold</i>	<b>SECURITY CHAIN</b>	“
<b>ANTI-PINCH PIN</b> from £34 <i>Gold</i>	<b>LOCKING BAR</b>	“
<b>RAM H/D SQ RETRACTABLE POST (RRB/SQ8)</b> £205 <i>Gold</i>	<b>SECURITY POST</b>	<b>RAM PERIMETER PROTECTION LTD</b> 0161 477 4001 <a href="http://www.rampost.co.uk">www.rampost.co.uk</a>
<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>		
<b>THIEFBEATERS IDENTIFICATION AND REGISTRATION SYSTEM</b> £299 <i>Gold</i>	<b>OVERT AND COVERT MARKING SYSTEM</b>	<b>THEFT SOLUTIONS LTD</b> 0800 083 3066 <a href="http://www.thiefbeaters.co.uk">www.thiefbeaters.co.uk</a>
<b>MICRODOT-HI TECH SECURITY</b> £30 <i>Bronze</i>	<b>COVERT MARKING SYSTEM</b>	<b>MICROTAG TECHNOLOGIES LTD</b> 01745 585725 <a href="http://www.micro-tag.com">www.micro-tag.com</a>

<b>TRACKING SYSTEMS</b>		
<b>TRACKSTAR PLUS</b> £399 plus £132 per annum or £369 duration of ownership monitoring charge <i>Gold</i>	<b>TRACKING SYSTEM</b> (TRANSFERABLE)	<b>TRAFFICMASTER PLC</b> 0870 0503000 <a href="http://www.trafficmaster.co.uk">www.trafficmaster.co.uk</a>
<b>PHANTOM PRO ACTIVE</b> £499 plus £99 per annum monitoring charge <i>Gold</i>	<b>TRACKING SYSTEM</b> (TRANSFERABLE)	<b>PHANTOM LTD</b> 08707 777060 <a href="http://www.phantom.uk.net">www.phantom.uk.net</a>
<b>COBRA TRAK 5</b> £999 including 12 months subscription plus £199 per annum monitoring charge thereafter <i>Gold</i>	<b>TRACKING SYSTEM</b> (TRANSFERABLE)	<b>COBRA NAVTRAK</b> 0870 0110050 <a href="http://www.navtrak.com">www.navtrak.com</a>
<b>COBRA TRAK ADR</b> £949 including 12 months subscription plus £199 per annum monitoring charge thereafter <i>Gold</i>	<b>TRACKING SYSTEM</b> (TRANSFERABLE)	“
<b>COBRA TRAK Q</b> £749 including 12 months subscription plus £135 per annum monitoring charge thereafter <i>Gold</i>	<b>TRACKING SYSTEM</b> (TRANSFERABLE)	“
<b>COBRA TRAK Q ATTIVO</b> £783 including 12 months subscription plus £169 per annum monitoring charge thereafter <i>Gold</i>	<b>TRACKING SYSTEM</b> (TRANSFERABLE)	“
<b>METIS TRACKER</b> £399 plus £85 optional fitting <i>Gold</i>	<b>NON-MONITORED GPS TRACKING DEVICE</b>	<b>METIS PRODUCTS</b> 01473 743722 <a href="http://www.metis-products.co.uk">www.metis-products.co.uk</a>

## **IMMOBILISERS AND ALARM IMMOBILISERS**

Choosing a suitable and effective system for your specific vehicle can be difficult, since features included and compatibility with different engines etc can vary significantly. There is also a choice between vehicle manufacturer-branded products and those supplied by independent specialists. We suggest that to ensure you make a good choice, you should contact the Vehicle Systems National Helpline (run by the Vehicle Systems Installation Board) on 01708 340911, or from their website: [www.vsib.co.uk](http://www.vsib.co.uk), who can give detailed advice and put you in touch with a local accredited installer. As a guideline, Thatcham approved immobilisers typically cost £100-150 (including professional fitting), while Thatcham approved alarm immobilisers are around £350-400 (again including fitting).