

Car Theft

Protecting yourself, and your car

The Layered Approach to Protection

The more time a thief has to spend stealing a car, the greater the chance of detection. That's why car thieves take the easy route--it's faster. To make your vehicle a tough target, the National Insurance Crime Bureau recommends a "Layered Approach." The more layers of protection on your vehicle, the tougher it is to steal.



Layer 1: The Common Sense Approach

The common sense approach is the simplest and most cost-effective way to thwart thieves. Some of these suggestions are obvious; some might not have occurred to you. But they can all help protect your car..

- lock your car-- half of all vehicles stolen are left unlocked
- take your keys-- nearly 20% of all vehicles stolen have keys in them
- park in well-lighted areas-- car thefts occur at night more than half the time
- park in attended lots-- car thieves don't like witnesses
- don't leave your car running, even for a minute-- convenience stores, gas stations, and ATMs are common hunting grounds for thieves, and cars left running to warm up on cold mornings are easy prey
- completely close your car windows
- don't leave valuables in plain view
- don't hide a spare set of keys in the car the pros know where to look
- keep your registration card with you not in the glove compartment
- park with your wheels turned toward the curb
- if your vehicle has rear-- wheel drive, back into your driveway-- rear wheels lock on rear-- wheel drive vehicles, making them tough to tow--front-- wheel drive vehicles should be parked front end first
- always use your emergency brake when parking
- if you have a garage, use it-- and when you do, lock both the vehicle and the garage door

- if your vehicle is going to be unattended for a long period of time, disable it--for example, remove the ignition fuse, coil wire or distributor rotor

Layer 2: Visible or Audible Deterrent

There are many devices designed to alert thieves that your car is protected. Popular examples include:

- audible alarms
- steering wheel locks
- steering column collars
- theft deterrent decals
- tire locks
- VIN etching: etch vehicle identification number (VIN) on vehicle windows

Layer 3: Vehicle Immobilizers

These devices prevent thieves from bypassing your ignition and hot--wiring your vehicle. Some use computer chips in ignition keys, while others inhibit the flow of electricity or fuel until you hit a hidden switch. Here are a few examples:

- smart keys
- use cut-offs
- kill switches
- starter, ignition and fuel disablers

Layer 4: Tracking Systems

A vehicle tracking system is a high-- tech device designed to be hidden in your automobile in order to emit a signal that the police can monitor if you report a theft. These systems are very effective in helping authorities recover stolen vehicles.

Protect yourself from carjacking

Carjackers threaten armed violence. Or worse. But you can help protect yourself and your car by taking some simple precautions.

- before getting into your car, pay attention to your surroundings and be alert to nearby activity
- always approach your car with your keys in hand
- always check the back seat before opening your car
- make sure doors you left locked are still locked when you return
- if someone is loitering near your car, don't approach it
- once you're in your car, keep your doors and windows locked

- carry a cellular phone and know your emergency numbers. You can use **911** anywhere in Massachusetts. When traveling, look at the information signs when you enter a new state. Most will post the emergency cellular number you can call.
- avoid high--crime areas, especially after dark
- be wary of people who approach your vehicle to ask for directions or change, or to hand out flyers
- when stopped in traffic, leave enough distance from the car in front of you to pull away quickly if necessary-- if another car bumps you, or if a tire goes flat, keep your doors and windows closed and locked, wait for the police to arrive, or drive to the nearest police station, service station or convenience store
- stop only at ATMs that are well--lighted and visible from the street-- pull as close as possible, then check your mirrors and look outside before opening your window
- if an armed carjacker confronts you, don't resist-- get out of the car quickly; it's better to lose your car than your life.