



DON'T GIVE THIEVES AN EASY RIDE

ADVICE TO HELP KEEP YOUR VEHICLE SAFE FROM CRIME

The following crime prevention information provides advice and practical tips to help you reduce your risk of becoming a victim of vehicle crime

For further information on how to protect your vehicle, please visit:

www.thamesvalley.police.uk/cp/crime-prevention/keeping-vehicles-safe



**THAMES VALLEY
POLICE**



Matthew Barber
Police & Crime Commissioner
for Thames Valley

KEYLESS CAR THEFTS

Cars with keyless entry open automatically when the key is close to the car. While convenient for you as the car owner, they have become a target for thieves who use devices to amplify the key signal, fooling the car so they can gain access, start the ignition and drive it away. This is called 'relay theft' and can happen while you're at home and the car is parked on your driveway.

According to the [2022-23 Crime Survey for England and Wales](#), a signal from a remote locking device was used in 40% of thefts of vehicles nationwide.

What can I do?

If you prefer, many cars let you turn off keyless entry in the settings allowing you to use a physical key or button sequence instead.

If you choose to keep keyless entry enabled, there are some simple things that you can do to help protect your vehicle and stop thieves, including:

- When at home keep your key a good distance from your car and keep them out of sight, making sure they are not visible through a front door or window.
- Put your car keys in a screened or signal-blocking pouch, such as a Faraday Bag. If your car doesn't unlock while the fob's inside, it's working. Don't forget to use one for your spare fob too.
- Lock your vehicle, even when refuelling or parked at home.
- Check the technology on your vehicle and how to use it. Some vehicles have a super or double locking feature, which disables the interior door handles and means a thief can't unlock the door from the inside if enabled.
- Use physical security measures such as steering wheel and gear stick locks, which have been tested to Secured By Design and Sold Secure standards.

VAMOOSE BURGLARY

Vamoose burglaries are burglaries which take place to specifically steal the keys to high-value vehicles. They often take place overnight when property occupants are in bed asleep, or whilst homeowners are away on holiday.

What can I do?

- If possible, park your car in a garage. If you don't have access to a garage, park in a well-lit area on your drive or on the street.
- Consider parking your car nose-in or blocking it with another vehicle to make it harder for thieves.
- Make sure your alarm and immobiliser is fully activated and car windows and doors are locked. Consider getting a Thatcham approved immobiliser if your car doesn't already have one.
- Keep your car keys away from windows and doors to prevent them from being "fished" through letterboxes using a hook.
- Make sure that any tools or ladders near your property are not accessible.
- Ensure that your front door is locked correctly and that windows are closed and locked.
- Use a steering lock. This can act as a deterrent, delaying the thieves' getaway time.
- Consider leaving your car keys with a trusted neighbour or relative if you are leaving your vehicle at home while going away.
- Do not advertise that you are going away on holiday on social media.

THEFT FROM YOUR VEHICLE

A really simple step that you can take to reduce the chance of having your vehicle broken into is to not to leave items and valuables on display as it can become an easy target for car thieves.

In the Thames Valley, we know that cash / valuables, machinery and tools and electronic devices are among some of the most commonly stolen items from vehicles.

What can I do?

- Take all your valuables with you or hide them from view as any item may tempt a thief. This includes documents that may look important.
- Leave no trace – leaving phone mounts or cables on view gives it away that you have left a smartphone or other device in your car. While you may have removed all items, thieves may break in to see if they are in your car, but out of sight.
- Where possible, try to park in well-lit areas which are covered by CCTV.
- Use public car parks which are [Park Mark](#) approved. A Park Mark, Safer Parking facility has been vetted by the police and has measures in place to create a safer environment.
- Always remember to lock your car – it may sound simple but car theft can easily happen while refuelling or popping back into your house quickly to get something. Fold-in mirrors which are left unfolded are a visual cue for thieves that you have left your car unlocked.

TOOL THEFT

Tool theft from vehicles is a significant issue for tradespeople. Tools are essential for their livelihoods and often represent a substantial financial investment. Theft can disrupt work, cause financial loss and lead to emotional distress and hardship.

Over £40m worth of tools were stolen in the UK in 2024. In the Thames Valley, machinery, tools and equipment rank highly amongst the most frequently stolen items from vehicles.

Offenders are prepared to apply increased force to gain access to high value equipment, so please remain extra vigilant if you keep tools in your vehicle.

What can I do?

- Secure your van, make sure it is locked.
- Don't leave tools in your vehicle, especially when parked overnight. If you need to leave your tools in your vehicle, consider using a lockable cabinet within your van to store them.



- Park in safe and secure areas. Parking in well-lit areas or near CCTV cameras can deter thieves and reduce the likelihood of tools being stolen.
- Park in ways to reduce access to your van, such as with doors close to a wall or fence.
- You may also want to consider additional security such as enhanced alarm systems or physical security devices.

MARK YOUR TOOLS

Protectively marking your tools can improve the chances of them being returned to you if stolen. Clear, visible marking can also make them less desirable and more difficult to sell on.

There are a number of ways you can mark your tools. You can mark them yourself with your name or postcode using paint pens and seal with a clear lacquer spray. Other options include engraving, etching, ceramic marking, and forensic marking solutions.

You can keep a record of the serial numbers of your tools and register them online at a property register site such as [Immobilise](#) as well as take photographs of items of value.

NUMBER PLATE THEFT

Number plates are a commonly stolen item from vehicles with theft often linked to other areas of criminality including drive-off fuel theft.

What can I do?

- Use anti-tamper screws to make it harder for thieves to remove your number plate.
- Park in well-lit areas which are covered by CCTV where possible.
- Reduce accessibility to at least one number plate by parking close against a wall where possible
- Don't post any pictures of your vehicle online.

If you are a victim of number plate theft, report the theft to the police immediately and contact the DVLA to prevent any wrongful penalties under your name.

You should also inform your insurance company should there be any claims linked to your vehicle.

CATALYTIC CONVERTER THEFT

Catalytic converters are fitted to car exhausts by manufacturers to reduce the level of dangerous emissions. They contain valuable metals which makes them a target for thieves. Taller vehicles that sit high above the road are particularly vulnerable.

What can I do?

- Ask your car dealer for advice on manufacturer approved locks or guards that are tested to Sold Secure Gold and Secured by Design standards.
- Park your vehicle in a garage overnight. If that's not possible, park in an area that's well-lit and overlooked by the public and try to park so that the converter can't easily be reached by potential thieves.
- Register your catalytic converter and mark it with a forensic marker, which will make it harder for thieves to dispose of.

MOTORCYCLE THEFT

In the Thames Valley, motorcycles make up over 22% of total vehicle thefts (Feb 2022 – Mar 2025). They are overrepresented, in terms of overall vehicle theft numbers, with motorcycles making up only 4% of all registered vehicles UK wide (Statstica).

Spring and summer months are key periods for motorcycle theft as they are more likely to be parked in public spaces, instead of in storage.



What can I do?

- Using a disc lock to help secure the front brake disc, or a grip lock to secure the brake and throttle controls.
- Use a chain lock through the back wheel, as the front wheel can be removed by thieves.
- Use a cover over your motorcycle, to make it less attractive to thieves who 'shop' for specific models.
- Always using the steering lock and remove the ignition keys, even if you are close by.
- Park in a [Park Mark](#) car park with additional security measures.
- Consider fitting a Thatcham-rated 1 or 2 alarm system with tracking, immobilisation, anti-grab and movement sensors.
- When at home, keep your motorcycle in a garage, shed or bike locker. If this isn't an option, park it near to your home where it's well overlooked with good lighting.





REPORTING TO THE POLICE

If you want to report vehicle crime or any suspicious behaviour around your vehicle, please contact Thames Valley Police at <https://www.thamesvalley.police.uk/> or by calling 101. In an emergency, or if a crime is taking place, call 999.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Thames Valley Police

For further crime prevention information and to report crime:

<https://www.thamesvalley.police.uk/>

Secured By Design (SBD)

SBD operates the Police Preferred Specification accreditation scheme which provides a recognised standard for all security products:

<https://www.securedbydesign.com/>

Park Mark

Find a Park Mark carpark in the UK

<https://parkmark.co.uk/>

