

Theft Without Keys

Thattham are aware of recent security concerns regarding a spate of high value vehicle thefts, where organised criminal gangs are gaining access to a vehicle's On Board Diagnostic unit and using highly sophisticated technology which compromises the vehicle security and enables the car to be stolen without key.



For further information, please contact Thattham's Vehicle Security Manager, Mike Briggs on mike.briggs@thattham.org

As the insurers' research centre, Thattham are working closely with police, vehicle manufacturers and insurers to develop preventative measures and to stay one step ahead of criminal activity. Thieves are continually looking at new ways to steal vehicles and the automotive industry are naturally working hard to fight this crime. Thattham have been aware of the issue for around 2 years and have responded by issuing a new version of the insurance vehicle security standard which manufacturers must comply with for insurance purposes. Manufacturers are therefore well on the way to introducing viable preventative measures.

Thattham have been very successful in driving down vehicle crime, having reduced reported theft of vehicles from 620,000 per year in the mid-90s to under 85,000 today.

(Source : Association of British Insurers)

Whilst high value vehicles originally appeared to be the target, we are seeing a growing number of makes and models being targeted in the same way. The most sophisticated vehicles with keyless systems could be most at risk as the thief does not need to have a mechanical key cut to overcome the steering column lock. A large number of these thefts are being attributed to organised international gangs and the targets are therefore vehicles which are in demand across Europe, as well as those where parts prices are creating additional demand.

The insurance industry has invested heavily in addressing vehicle security and safety concerns through Thattham. This issue is of course being taken seriously and is therefore a key area of focus for Thattham's vehicle security team.

Robust solutions will take time and in the meantime our security experts are offering the following basic security advice and recommendations to concerned motorists

- i. Park your car in an area with monitored CCTV or in a manned car park. If you have a garage, then use it. If none of these are an option then park in a well-lit area.
- ii. Add a device to physically immobilise the car like a Thattham approved wheel clamp or a steering wheel lock. Any physical device like this will act as a very visible deterrent and given the additional time and effort that will be needed to overcome these devices will make would thieves think twice about targeting your vehicle. These devices are relatively inexpensive.

- iii. Once the criminals have managed to programme their own key then all of the vehicle's in built security is down. You may therefore wish to install an additional, aftermarket Thatcham approved alarm or electronic immobiliser which can scare away the criminals or prevent them from driving the car away even if they have the key. To ensure the reliability of the installation always use a Thatcham Recognised Installer.
- iv. You may also consider a Thatcham Category 5 or Category 6 vehicle tracking and recovery system. Whilst it may not prevent the initial theft, with an average recovery time of 2 hours it will certainly ensure you get your vehicle back as quickly as possible. Other Tracking systems to lower Category standards can also be effective at aiding vehicle recovery.
- v. Refer to [this pdf](#) for a full listing of Thatcham compliant security devices