

Over 1 million vehicles are stolen every year. In 1990 alone, more than 1.6 million vehicles were stolen—at an estimated national cost of over *eight billion dollars*.

In the time it takes you to read this pamphlet, nine cars will be stolen!

Don't make it easy for professional thieves or joyriders to take your wheels.

Protect your vehicle

- ☐ Lock your car and pocket the key when you leave—even if just for a minute. Close windows all the way and make sure the trunk is locked.
- ☐ Control your keys. Never leave an identification tag on your key ring. If your keys are lost or stolen, it could help a thief locate your car and burglarize your home.
- ☐ Don't leave your registration inside your vehicle; carry it with you. Important identification papers or credit cards should never be left in the glove compartment.
- ☐ If carrying packages or valuable items, store them in your trunk if possible. If you do leave packages, clothing or other articles in the car, make sure they are out of sight.
- ☐ Park in well-lit, busy areas. Avoid leaving your vehicle in unattended parking lots for long periods of time. If you park in a lot where you must leave a key, leave the ignition key only, to protect items in trunk or glove box.
- ☐ When buying a car, ask about anti-theft options such as steering column locks, alarms, switches that interrupt the fuel or electronic systems, and locks for tape decks, batteries and gas tanks. Many insurance companies offer reduced rates to owners who install security devices.
- ☐ Keep your car's Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) and a complete description in a safe place at home. Since 1969, the

federal government has required manufacturers to engrave a unique number, the VIN, on all passenger cars in one visible and several hidden locations. One VIN is engraved on a metal plate on the dashboard near the windshield. VINs of stolen cars are registered with the FBI's National Crime Information Center.

Bicycles, motorcycles and trail bikes

- ☐ Park out of sight in a garage or basement, or use a cover.
- ☐ Engrave with an Operation Identification number recommended by local law enforcement.
- ☐ Lock all bicycles with a case-hardened chain or cable and lock, winding the cable through the frame and both wheels and then around a fixed object.
- ☐ Use the fork lock found on most street motorcycles. For extra protection of your bicycle or motorcycle, invest in a heavy U-shaped lock made of extremely hard steel that cannot be hacksawed, or a case-hardened chain and a sturdy padlock.
- ☐ Watch out for key numbers! Some motorcycle manufacturers stamp the key number on the lock. With this number, anyone can go to a key maker and have a key cut that will fit perfectly. Many key makers ask for identification, but don't take chances—write down your key number, store the number in a safe place, and then file it off the lock.

Trucks and RVs

- ☐ Many specialized vehicles don't have VINs and should be marked with another ID number, such as a driver's license.
- ☐ Lock up easy-to-carry items like motors and camping gear before leaving your vehicle.

- ☐ Use secured "toppers" or tool boxes for your truck. Don't assume a thief can't lift a box because it's heavy.

Cellular phone/CB alert!

Cellular phones and citizens' band radios are popular targets for thieves. Locking the car, parking in a well-lit place and removing antennas offer some protection. To protect your CB radio from theft, install it in a slide mount so it can be taken into the home or office or locked in the trunk when the car is not occupied. Keep a record of serial and model numbers and engrave an identifying number on the phone or radio. Another alternative is a factory-installed unit which is harder to rip out than a portable one. Anti-theft devices are also available. Buy cellular phones and CBs from reputable dealers.

License plates

License plates frequently are stolen from cars and used on stolen cars used in other crimes. Get in the habit of checking your plates when you drive. A few drops of solder on the bolts or blurring the threads can help safeguard your plates.

Avoid buying a stolen vehicle

- ☐ Verify that the VIN plate is intact and check it against the VIN on the ownership documents.
- ☐ Ask the seller about the vehicle's history and past financing and insurance. Verify this information with the bank or insurance company.
- ☐ Be wary when purchasing used auto parts—you could be patronizing a "chop shop" where stolen goods are sold and indirectly encouraging auto theft.