

PREVENTING VEHICLE CRIME

Becoming a victim of any type of crime can be a distressing experience, which can leave you feeling angry, upset and vulnerable. One of Kent Police's core aims is to help ensure that the people and communities it serves are kept safe and free from crime. By taking some simple steps you can increase your personal safety at home, in public and on the roads. You can also help protect your home, business or vehicle from crime by following some basic crime prevention advice.

Vehicle Security – Cars

- Keep your car keys somewhere out of sight in your home where they aren't visible from windows or doors. When you go to bed, take keys into your bedroom to make them less accessible to intruders. Frustrated car thieves are turning their attention to stealing car keys rather than tackling sophisticated security devices on vehicles. They will use methods such as 'Hooking theft' where wire, cane or fishing rods are fed through windows or letterboxes to retrieve keys hanging close by.
- Use anti-theft device on your car. Get one that is Sold Secure approved. You can search for suppliers on www.securebydesign.com and your insurance company may also be able to advise you on approved security devices.
- Secure anything that's on the outside of your vehicle. Anything left on roof-racks, tailgate racks, holiday top boxes or in tool chests are easily stolen when the vehicle is parked. The use of cable locks, padlocks and self-locking tools chests, which are secured to the vehicle, makes them more secure, but still, don't leave things in them if you can avoid it. For further information and advice, visit <http://www.soldsecure.com/>

Daily Fact - Crime statistics indicate that the average car thief would wish to spend no longer than 2½ minutes gaining entry to a vehicle and driving off.

Bikes

- When parking away from home make sure your bike or motorbike is locked to a heavy-duty piece of street furniture and where possible with the lock or chain off the floor.
- At home, lock bicycles and motorbikes in a secure garage or shed if you have one, using good quality u-lock or chain and padlock to a ground anchor.
- Fit an alarm to your motorcycle
- Mark your bicycle frame with your postcode in 2 separate locations if possible, one of which should be hidden.
- Register your bike for free with www.immobilise.com. This will help police to find it if it gets stolen. The immobilise website also has some useful tips about bike security.
- Take a photo of your bike and keep it with the insurance details. Make a note of the make, model and serial number.

Preventing Theft from Vehicles

- Try to park somewhere open and well-lit, in a garage, or in view from your home.
- Lock your vehicle, including the boot. Close the windows and sunroof.
- Take all valuables with you when you leave your vehicle. Don't leave **anything** on show in your car when you park – not even a coat or empty carrier bag.
- If you have a removable sat-nav, remove it and take it with you if possible when you park up, even if only for a short time. Remove the mounting, polish any marks off the windscreen and hide the cable and mounting from view.
- Store car ownership information at home, not in your car glove box.

- Do not programme your sat-nav 'Home' as your correct home address, use a neighbour's or a road nearby as it could be a risk if your house keys are stolen or if a crime happens to your vehicle while you are out then the offender knows where you live and that you are not home.
- Number plates are often stolen for criminal use. Use plates secured with anti-theft screws, available from car accessory stores.

Safety tips for driving in winter

Vision

- Keep the windscreen and other windows clear – if your vision is obscured through dirt, snow or even sticker-infested car windows you could face a potentially heavy fine. Clear snow from the roof as well as from windows as this can fall onto the windscreen obscuring your view. It can be a hazard to other road users as well.
- Dazzle from a low winter sun can also be a problem when trying to see the road.

Visibility

- Make sure that all bulbs are working and that lenses are clean for safety and to be legal on the road. When roads are really mucky you might need to clean lights after every journey. Keep the number plates clean too, as you can be fined if they are dirty and illegible.
- If you have to clear snow from the car it's important to clear it from the lights - front and back - as well as from the glass and roof.
- You must use headlights when visibility is seriously reduced. You may also use front or rear fog lights but these must be switched off when visibility improves as they can dazzle other road users and obscure your brake lights.

Tyres

- It is recommended at least 3mm of tread for winter motoring, and definitely no less than 2mm.
- Don't reduce tyre pressures to get more grip – it doesn't work, and reduces stability.
- It's rare to need snow chains unless you live in an isolated area hit with heavy snow, and where the roads are not cleared. They must be removed to drive on a metalled road without a reasonable covering of snow.
- Consider changing to winter or all-season tyres – these have a higher silica content in the tread which prevents it hardening at lower temperatures, and therefore gives better grip in cold wet conditions.

Safety checks before your journey

- Get up at least 10 minutes early to give you time to prepare the car.
- Don't drive off like a tank-commander, with a tiny hole cleared in the windscreen. Clear all windows using a scraper and de-icer.
- Use a cigarette lighter to warm a key for a frozen lock. Don't breathe on the lock, as the moisture will condense and freeze.
- Plan routes to favour major roads which are more likely to have been cleared and gritted.
- Put safety before punctuality when the bad weather closes in. Allow extra time for winter journeys but be prepared for the inevitability of being late for work due to unexpected delay.
- Gentle manoeuvres are the key to safe driving - stopping distances are 10 times longer in ice and snow.

Who to contact to report suspicious activity or a crime?

- If there is a threat to life or public safety, or a crime may be in progress dial 999
- To report a crime other than a crime in progress call 101.
- To report a crime other than a crime in progress you can also go to <https://www.kent.police.uk/ro/report/> to report your crime online.