VEHICLE THEFT PREVENTION

What Consumers Should Know

U.S. Department of Transportation

NHTSA

www.nhtsa.gov

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Motor vehicles are the primary mode of transportation for most Americans, and often an indispensible part of their lives. They are used for a myriad of reasons, including going to work, school and the grocery store. But what would happen if that vehicle suddenly disappeared? Many would find it difficult, if not impossible, to take care of even the simplest everyday errands.

The Department of Transportation's (DOT) National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) establishes, implements and enforces vehicle antitheft regulations. NHTSA has set the standard to help consumers and vehicle owners address the vehicle theft problem for more than 25 years.

To learn more about NHTSA's vehicle theft prevention laws and regulations, visit SaferCar.gov/theft.

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Which Vehicles are Most at Risk?

You might think that the most stolen vehicles are expensive sports vehicles or multi-purpose passenger vehicles, but that's not always the case. In fact, according to the FBI's 2011 Uniform Crime Report, nearly 74% of all motor vehicles reported stolen are passenger cars.

According to NHTSA's theft rate data, there were a total of 9,001,856 Model Year 2010 vehicles produced in calendar year 2010—and 10,568 were stolen. Of those stolen, 8,736 were passenger cars, 1,689 were multipurpose passenger vehicles and 143 were light-duty trucks.

The top 10 vehicles from NHTSA's 2010 theft rate data compilation are:

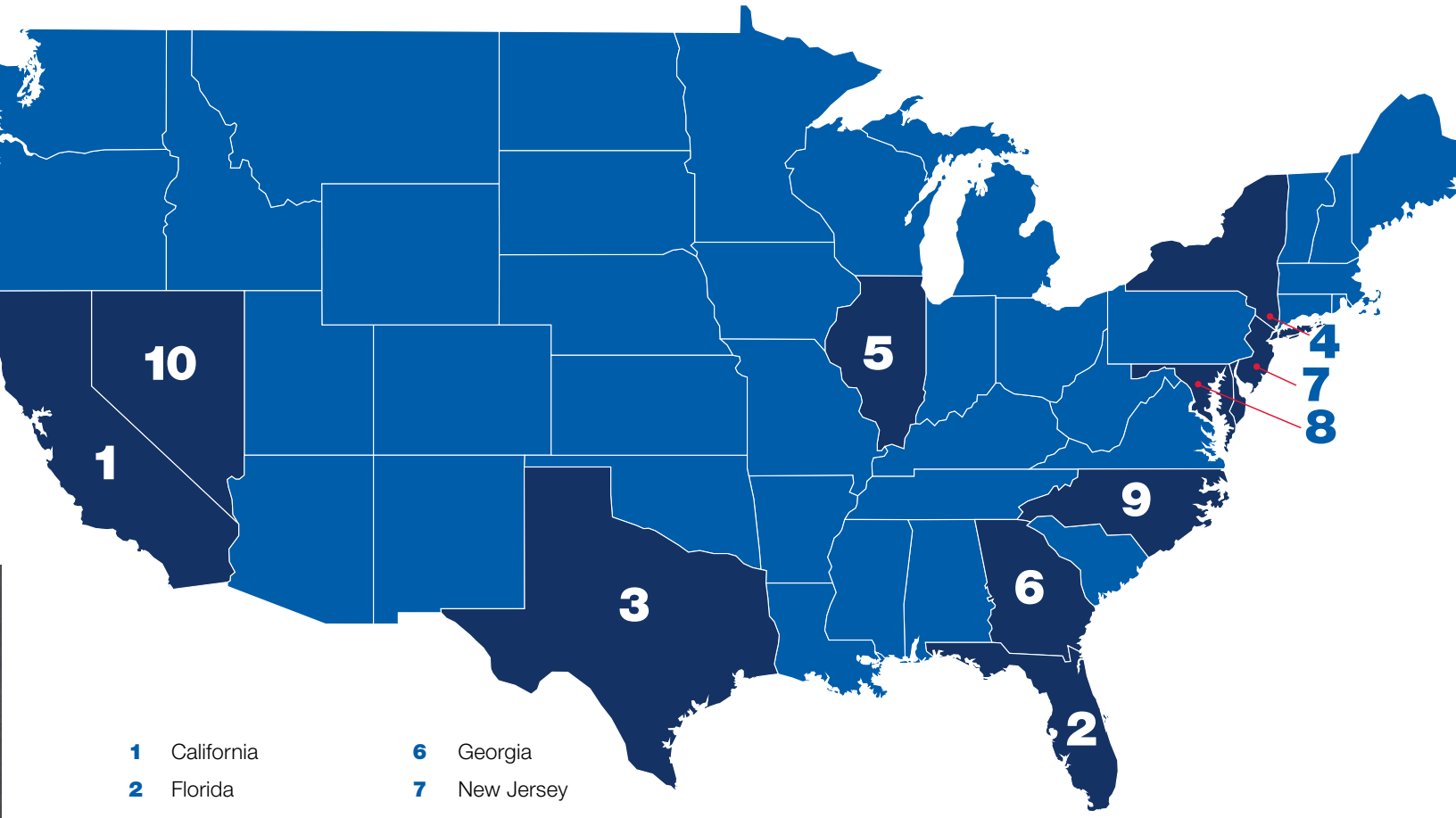
1. Dodge Charger
2. Pontiac G6
3. Chevrolet Impala
4. Chrysler 300
5. Infiniti FX35
6. Mitsubishi Galant
7. Chrysler Sebring
8. Lexus SC
9. Dodge Avenger
10. Kia Rio

For more information on NHTSA's final theft rate data, please visit NHTSA.gov/theft.

In the United States, a motor vehicle is stolen every 44 seconds.

Target Spots for Vehicle Theft

It doesn't matter whether you live in a big metropolitan city, surrounding suburbs or the rural countryside—we are all susceptible to vehicle theft. Coast to coast, region to region, no one is immune. The following is a list of the 10 U.S. States with the most stolen vehicles for CY/MY 2010:



1 California
2 Florida
3 Texas
4 New York
5 Illinois
6 Georgia
7 New Jersey
8 Maryland
9 North Carolina
10 Nevada

Use Common Sense When Parking and Exiting Your Vehicle

- Always take your key, don't leave it in or on your vehicle.
- Always close and lock all windows and doors when you park.
- Park in well-lit areas.
- Always keep your vehicle in your garage, if possible.
- Never, ever leave valuables in your vehicle, especially where they can be seen.
- Never, ever leave the area while your vehicle is running.

It's Not Just Your Vehicle — Thieves Want the Parts Too

Radios and wheel covers aren't the only popular stolen vehicle parts thieves take. They want whatever sells, from the mandated labeled parts to those that aren't. NHTSA's regulations require vehicle manufacturers to label their vehicle's major component parts—called parts-marking—with the vehicle identification number (VIN) unless the vehicle line is granted an exemption. An exemption may occur if an antitheft device has been installed by the manufacturer as standard equipment on the entire vehicle line. Parts-marking has been shown to help reduce and deter motor vehicle theft, as well as help law enforcement authorities identify, trace and recover parts from stolen motor vehicles which ultimately helps with prosecuting the crime.

Vehicle thieves can strip a vehicle in less than 30 minutes—and make two to four times a vehicle's worth by selling its individual parts.

The following parts are federally required to be marked:

- Engine
- Transmission
- Hood
- Right/left front fenders
- Right/left front doors
- Right/left rear doors (four-door models)
- Sliding or cargo door(s)
- Deck lid
- Tailgate or hatchback (if present)
- Front/rear bumpers
- Right/left rear quarter panels
- Right/left-side assembly (MPVs)
- Pickup box and/or cargo box (LDTs)
- Rear door(s) (both doors in case of double doors)

There are other hot parts and items that criminals have recently targeted, but don't fall under NHTSA's regulatory responsibility:

- Air bags
- Rims and wheels
- Batteries
- Radiators
- Catalytic converters
- Radios and CD players
- Portable GPS units
- DVD entertainment systems
- Any items left visible in your car, such as iPods, laptops, and purses

Where You Least Expect to Have Your Vehicle Stolen

If you think parking your car at your home is a safe haven, think again. It's no safer there than in a parking lot garage, on a road or in an alley. Thieves are always on the prowl, canvassing these places. Breaking into homes just to steal vehicle keys is becoming more common. FBI reports show that more than three out of four vehicles are stolen at these locations, and more than one-half of thefts occur in areas where vehicles are parked without attendants.

Did You Know?

Although a vehicle theft can happen at any time, the top two months for vehicle thefts are July and August.

40-50% of vehicle theft is due to driver error, which includes leaving vehicle doors unlocked and leaving keys in the ignition or on the seats.

Tips and Prevention

Theft Prevention Programs, Initiatives and Enforcement Activities

There are various State and Federal prevention programs, initiatives and enforcement activities designed to help counter vehicle theft. Some include:

- **DOT Federal Parts-Marking and Antitheft Device Regulation:** NHTSA has published many antitheft regulations to help in the reduction of vehicle theft and to help inform the public about NHTSA's important vehicle theft prevention policies. These include a regulation that encourages manufacturer installation of passive antitheft devices as standard equipment in factory-delivered motor vehicles and a regulation that requires motor vehicle manufacturers to mark original equipment and replacement parts of passenger motor vehicles with a vehicle identification number. **To learn more about NHTSA's Vehicle Theft Prevention regulations, please visit NHTSA.gov/theft**.

- **National Motor Vehicle Title Information System (NMVTIS):** Overseen by the Department of Justice, NMVTIS is designed to protect consumers from fraud and unsafe vehicles and to keep stolen vehicles from being re-sold. NMVTIS also assists states and law enforcement in deterring and preventing title fraud and other crimes. **To learn more about NMVTIS, please visit http://www.NMVTIS.gov/index.html.**

- ***Watch Your Car*-type Programs:** Programs such as Watch Your Car provide decals for motor vehicle owners to voluntarily display on their vehicles to alert police that their vehicle is not normally driven between the hours of 1 a.m. and 5 a.m. Motorists may also choose to display another decal to signify that their vehicle is not normally driven across international land borders or in the proximity of ports of entry.

- **Bait Vehicles:** Law enforcement agencies plant decoy vehicles in high-crime areas to capture vehicle thieves. When the thief takes off with the stolen vehicle, the police are able to disable the vehicle and capture that individual.

- **Free Window Etching:** Law enforcement agencies sometimes hold free window etching events where they permanently etch VINs on windows, making it costly for thieves to mask the identity of the vehicle and easier for these agencies to trace and recover a stolen vehicle.

- **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Law enforcement agencies sometimes put together public awareness campaigns for vehicle owners to learn about the importance of using an alarm system, locking windows and doors and having a visual deterrent like a steering-wheel lock. Other activities that increase awareness include distribution of free steering-wheel locks at public safety fairs, block-watch parties and community events.

The estimated total value of vehicles stolen nationwide is more than $4.3 billion.

- **The Insurance Industry:** Some insurance companies offer rate reductions for vehicles equipped with antitheft devices, as well as for owners who VIN-etch their windows/glass and garage their vehicles. Other insurance companies advertise cash reward programs for information leading to vehicle recovery and the arrest and conviction of motor vehicle criminals. The insurance industry also works closely with local, state and national law enforcement to report and prosecute fraud in auto theft, provide bait cars to law enforcement in high-theft areas and monitor auctions for suspicious buyers who bid for salvage that will be dismantled for parts.

For more information on local initiatives, contact your local police department, theft prevention authority or insurance company to see if any of these theft prevention initiatives are active in your area. For more information on Federal program initiatives, contact NHTSA or the Department of Justice.

In 2011, over 715,000 motor vehicles were reported stolen in the United States.

Outwit the Vehicle Thieves

Beat the thieves at their own game. Follow these simple steps to help safeguard your vehicle:

Protect Your Vehicle

There are several different types of antitheft systems and devices designed to make vehicles more difficult to steal and—in the event they are stolen—easier to trace and recover. Here's how some of them work:

- **Audible and Visible Devices:** Audible devices deter theft by emitting sound that brings attention to an unauthorized attempt to steal or enter your vehicle, such as a horn alarm. Visible devices are devices that create a visual threat/warning/deterrence to a potential thief—such as those created by the use of steering-wheel, brake and wheel locks—as well as theft-deterrent decals, flashing lights and window etching.

- **Immobilizing-Type Devices:** Immobilizing-type devices are electronic devices that prevent thieves from bypassing your vehicle's ignition system and hot-wiring the vehicle. Some electronic devices incorporate computer chips in ignition keys. Other immobilizer-type devices disable the flow of electricity or fuel to the engine, such as fuel cut-off devices, kill switches, and starter, ignition and fuel disablers.

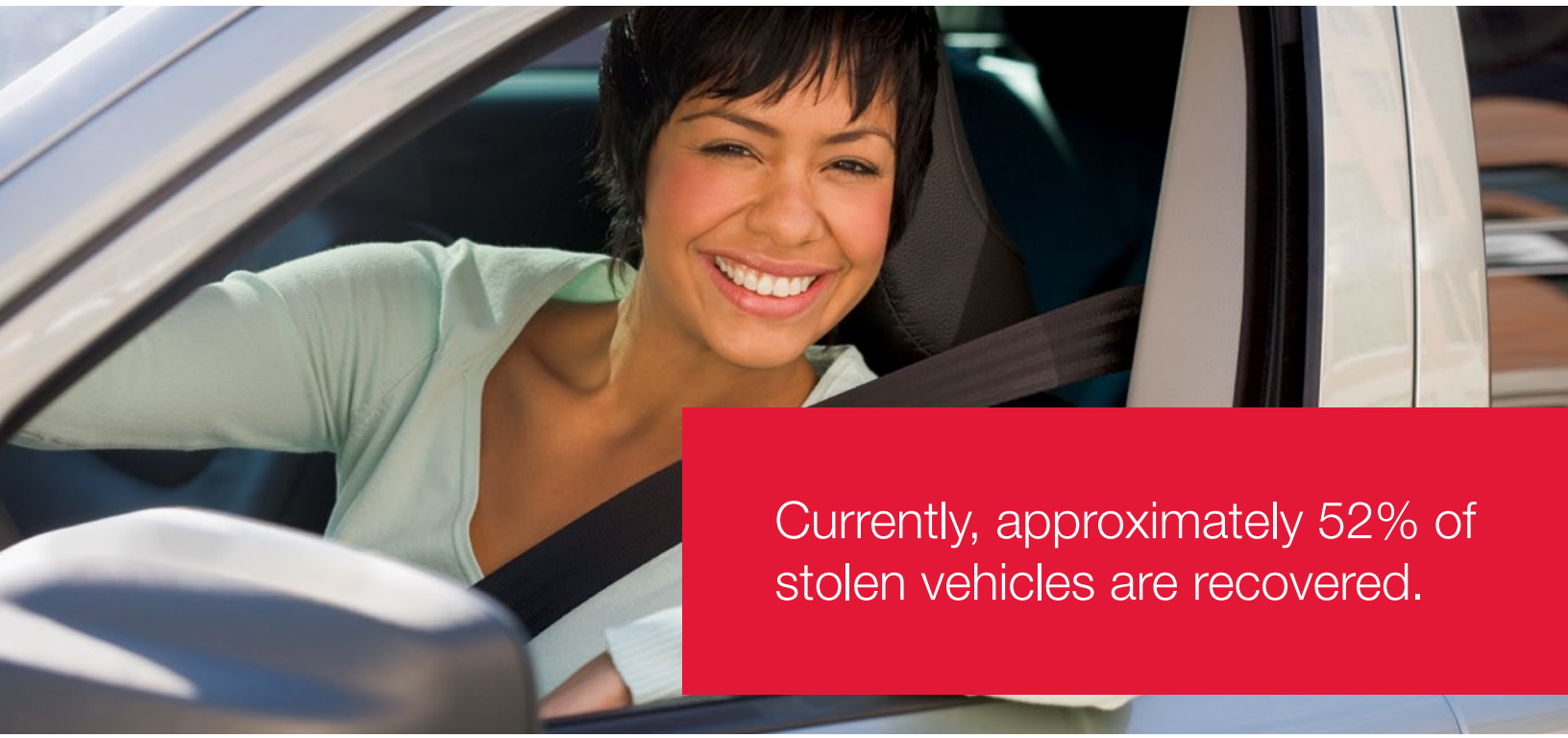
- **Vehicle Recovery Systems:** A vehicle thief will look for any way to steal your vehicle, and sometimes no matter what you do to prevent or deter vehicle theft, it can still happen. Some vehicle manufacturers are installing devices that use electronic transmission technology to aid in the recovery of your vehicle in the event that it has been stolen. This electronic transmission technology has the potential to also help law enforcement reveal the location of other stolen vehicles—and possibility catch the thief in the act.

“Where’s My Ride?”

Let’s say you’re concluding a nice evening out with friends or have finished running an errand and you notice that your car is not parked in the spot where you left it. If you find yourself in the unfortunate situation where your vehicle was stolen, here are some steps you should take.

Contact police immediately to file a stolen vehicle report. The police will provide you with either a copy of the police report and/or a case number that you will need to provide to your insurance company. You may also be asked to provide the following information: License plate number, make, model and color of car, VIN number and any identifying characteristics.

Contact your insurance company as soon as possible to file a claim within 24 hours of when you discovered your vehicle was stolen. If you find your vehicle before authorities do, contact the police and your insurance company immediately.



Additional Resources

Other resources that may be useful in helping you to find out more about motor vehicle theft are:

- Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Department of Justice
- Uniform Crime Reports
- Highway Loss Data Institute
- International Association of Auto Theft Investigators
- National Insurance Crime Bureau

To obtain more information about motor vehicle theft prevention and how to shield your vehicle from theft you may contact the office below:

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
Office of International Policy, Fuel Economy and Consumer Programs
Consumer Standards Division
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE.
West Building
NVS-131, Room W43-302
Washington, DC 20590
Office: (202) 366-4807
Fax: (202) 493-0073

Or visit us online at: **SaferCar.gov/theft**.

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