



Date:

Dear

As the owner of a high-performance car, you should be aware there has been a series of thefts and attempted thefts of these types of vehicles in your area over the last few months.

Although high-specification cars have improved locking devices and sophisticated alarm systems which have made them more difficult to steal, this has not detracted from their appeal and can mean car thieves need to take the keys directly from the owners. Often, these criminals are not afraid to use intimidation and violence to get what they want.

The common term for this offence is carjacking. This type of offence first hit the headlines a couple of years ago following a number of high-profile incidents committed in other parts of the UK. The common portrait of carjacking is that of a violence offence and whilst thieves aren't afraid to use violence and intimidation in these types of offences it isn't the only way in which they will attempt to steal a car.

Although the number of offences committed in the West Midlands is extremely low, police are keen to work with car owners to reduce the chance of them becoming a victim. Being aware of how carjackers operate, what they are looking for and some basic crime prevention measures can reduce the risk to you.

Types of carjacking:

Some of the most common forms of this type of offence take place while motorists are driving:

“The bump and rob”

This is where a car, usually with a driver and at least one passenger, rear ends or bumps you in traffic. The aim is to get you out of the car to check the damage and exchange information. While you are doing this the passenger takes the opportunity to jump into your car and drive off.

“Cone obstruction”

This is where the carjacker blocks the drivers exit so they have to get out of their car to remove the cone. The carjacker, as the driver is removing the cone, will then jump in the car and drive off.

Golden opportunities: What do carjackers look for?

In addition to the above methods there are various other opportunities, which carjackers will seize to steal a car. Drivers are particularly vulnerable when they have to slow down, for example, at crossroads controlled by lights or motorway exits.

Carjackers will also look for an opportunity when people are distracted, for example when returning from a cash machine or after paying for petrol. They may even approach on a private driveway. Once people see their own front door they often drop their guard as they are in familiar territory. The carjacker will take advantage of this. On rare occasions, offenders will enter people's homes to get their car keys.

Reducing the risk:

- If you are bumped or rear-ended in a suspicious way, do not leave your car. Lock the doors and windows and drive to the nearest police station
- Never leave the keys in the ignition when leaving your car, e.g. when paying for petrol or getting a ticket to park. That's all the time it takes for a car to be taken
- **Be alert** when you are outside – consider who is around you and where your keys are
- **Don't have your keys on view when going to the bank or paying for petrol**
- Be aware of other cars around you. Never stop too near the car in front
- Before getting out of your car, check your surroundings – **wherever you are**. If you feel uneasy do not park, drive off
- When at home at night make sure car keys are not in view. **However we do not advise keeping them in the bedroom**. If thieves did enter your home you don't want to attract their attention when you are at your most vulnerable. Remember it's the keys they want, not you
- If you have a garage, always make sure the car is parked in it overnight
- Install a good home security system. **You've made a huge investment – protect it**
- Invest in a tracking device so if your car is stolen it stands a better chance of being traced
- Use your common sense. Different circumstances will mean different reactions, but do not put yourself in danger – **trust your instincts**

If it does happen to you:

- If a carjacker threatens you, give up the car. Don't argue - your safety is more important
- Get away from the scene as quickly as possible
- Report the crime immediately to the police
- Try to be as accurate as you can in your description of the carjacker(s)

West Midlands Police are working to reduce these incidents by increasing our patrols in your area at key times and by deploying officers, both overtly and covertly, to target car thieves. If you would like any further information or advice about vehicle safety, please call your local police station on 0845 113 5000 or visit our website at: www.west-midlands.police.uk/safermotors

Yours sincerely

West Midlands Police