GUARDING AGAINST VEHICLE THEFT

JULY 14, 2017

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With technology driving the future of vehicle security it seems that a subject such as this is almost academic. Until one reflects on the fact that South Africa still has a fairly old 'car park' with many older vehicles still very vulnerable to vehicle theft.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, in the USA, is designating July as 'National Vehicle Theft Prevention Month.' This must indicate that car theft is a common problem in the US. According to them, vehicle theft peaks during summer months.

Below is a NHTSA video offering five common-sense tips for preventing vehicle theft. Basically there are four layers of protection which serve to protect one's vehicle. These are:

1. Common Sense — The common-sense approach to protection is the easiest and also the most cost-effective way to thwart would-be thieves. You should always:

- Remove your keys from the ignition
- Lock your doors /close your windows
- Park in a well-lit area

2. Warning Device — The second layer of protection is a visible or audible device that alerts thieves the vehicle is protected. Popular devices include:

- Audible alarms
- Steering column collars
- Steering wheel/brake pedal lock
- Brake locks
- Wheel locks
- Theft deterrent decals
- Identification markers in or on the vehicle
- VIN etching
- Micro dot marking

3. Immobilising Device — The third layer of protection is a device that prevents thieves from bypassing the ignition and hot-wiring the vehicle. Some electronic devices also have computer chips in ignition keys. Other devices inhibit the flow of electricity or fuel to the engine until a hidden switch or button is activated. Some examples are:

- Smart keys
- Fuse cut-offs

- Kill switches
- Starter, ignition, and fuel pump disablers
- Wireless ignition authentication

4. Tracking Device — The final layer of protection is a tracking device that emits a signal alerting the relevant tracking company when the vehicle is stolen. Tracking devices are very effective in helping authorities recover stolen vehicles. Some systems employ telematics, which combine GPS and wireless technologies, to allow remote monitoring of a vehicle. If the vehicle is moved, the system will alert the owner and the vehicle can be tracked via computer.