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ILLINOIS
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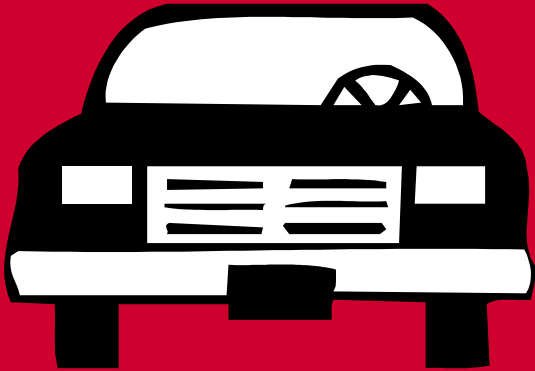
ILLINOIS
MOTOR VEHICLE
THEFT PREVENTION COUNCIL

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Some information in this brochure was taken from *Don't give a thief a free ride*, Crime Prevention Association of Oregon, and *Everyone loses when a car is stolen*, Community Carwatch.

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Will your family's car be stolen this year?



Not if you can help it. And yes, you can. McGruff the Crime Dog here. It's an unfortunate fact that auto theft is one of today's most costly crimes. The good news is that you *can* help prevent it, and with your help, your family can, too. Take some tips from me to help your family combat auto theft. Let's "Take A Bite Out Of Crime."

The basics

Let's start by checking your family's knowledge of auto theft in Illinois. Go through these statements with your family, and try to pick the correct answer.

1. Approximately _____ vehicles were stolen in Illinois in 1996.
a. 51,000 b. 58,000 c. 64,000
2. Illinois ranks _____ among states in highest number of car thefts.
a. seventh b. tenth c. fifth
3. Vehicle theft costs Illinois residents almost _____ a day.
a. \$1 million b. \$100,000 c. \$10,000
4. Nearly _____ of Illinois drivers do not think that car theft is a serious problem.
a. 90% b. 75% c. 50%

Now let's see how everyone did. Turn the brochure upside down for the answers.

The answers:
1. b. 58,000
2. c. fifth
3. a. \$1 million
4. a. 90%

Use common sense

As you can see, auto theft is a big problem, but you *can* help prevent it. Preventing auto theft starts with using common sense. You'd be surprised at how many cars are stolen because the owner left the car unlocked and the keys in the ignition!

I'm sure your family reminds you to do certain things. After all, we all need reminding from time to time. So now it's your turn to remind them of the common sense measures to prevent car theft. Go through these questions with the drivers in your home.

	Yes	No
Do you always park in busy, well-lighted areas?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you always turn wheels toward curb and apply the emergency brake?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you always roll up the windows, lock the car, and take the keys, even if you will be gone only a short time?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you always take your wallet or purse, and the car registration and insurance card with you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you always put packages and valuables in the trunk?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Those who answered "yes" to all the questions are taking the right first steps to preventing auto theft!

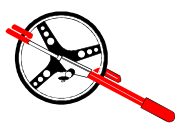
The next few steps to protecting your family's car can be a little tricky. Remember that the more you do to make the car more secure, the longer it takes a thief to try to steal it.

Sure, sometimes securing the car can take more time and cost more than your family would like. But think of it this way: the drivers in your family already pay for car insurance. The little money they spend on these solutions acts as long-term insurance, purchased over several years, that could prevent their car from being the next one stolen. In fact, Illinois insurance companies will reduce your family's insurance premiums if they use these theft deterrents. Contact your family's insurance agent and ask about these discounts.

Use visible or audible anti-theft devices

These deterrents alert thieves that your vehicle is protected before he or she tries to steal it. Encourage your family to look into the following:

- **Steering wheel lock.** This steel hook locks the steering wheel to the brake pedal, preventing the steering wheel from moving more than a few degrees.
- **Steering wheel club.** This highly visible, metal device locks horizontally to prevent the steering wheel from turning. The lock will deter amateur thieves.



- **Steering-column collar.** This is a permanently installed steel or alloy cover that encases the steering column, preventing access to the ignition.



Before installing any anti-theft devices, check the car's warranty. Some warranties prohibit the installation of certain mechanisms.

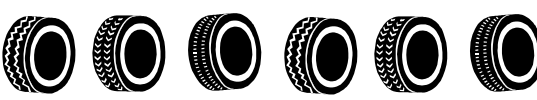
- **Beat Auto Theft (BAT) stickers.** Under the Illinois BAT program, individuals voluntarily register their cars with the police and display a numbered BAT decal in their window. The decal explains that police may stop the car between 1 a.m. and 5 a.m. (when the owner normally would not be driving). For more information, call the Secretary of State's Office, Department of Police, 1-800-698-0561.
- **Car alarms.** These systems will activate a siren, lights, or horn if someone tampers with your car. The sensitivity levels vary and are often adjustable. It is best to select a level that activates the alarm only when someone is intruding, not, for example, when a strong wind blows.

Use vehicle immobilizers

Encourage your family to install devices that immobilize the car; by interrupting up to three separate engine systems – starter, ignition, and fuel – these devices prevent thieves from hot wiring, then driving off with, the car...at least not very far. These include the following:

- **Kill switch.** This switch prevents the electrical current from reaching the coil or carburetor. (To start the car, the switch must be activated.)

- **Delayed ignition cutoff.** This electronic system disables the engine after a preset period of time.
- **Microchip key.** The key contains a microchip that matches the car's computerized code. If the car is hot-wired or any key other than the original is used, the car will not start or the engine will cut off in minutes.



Finally, talk with your family about installing an electronic transmitter. If the car is reported stolen, police can trace the transmitter's signal to locate the car.

Vehicle Identification Number. 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 are registered with the FBI's computerized National Crime Information Center. It's a good idea to also etch the VIN on the windows, doors, fenders, and hood and trunk lids. This helps discourage professional thieves, who have to remove or replace etched parts before selling the car. It also deters thieves who strip cars for parts. Make a list of the VIN, your tag number, and a complete description of your car and keep it in a safe place at home. If your vehicle is stolen, the police will need this information. For more information on VIN etching, contact the Illinois Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Council, 312-793-8550.



What if it happens to your family?

If the car is stolen, immediately report the crime to the police. Give details of when and where, and the vehicle's license plate number, registration, and Vehicle Identification Number. If someone saw the thief or thieves, they should describe what the suspect(s) looked like – sex, race, age, hair, and so on. Also, the owner needs to file a claim with the insurance company as soon as possible. Quick action could help police recover the vehicle.

Don't buy a stolen vehicle or its parts

If your family is looking to buy a new car, they may run across stolen autos for sale. To avoid buying a stolen car or parts, they should:

- Make sure the car has the proper titles, that the VIN is intact, and the "federal sticker" is on the inside of the driver's door. That sticker should match the VIN.
- Ask the seller about the vehicle's history and past financing and insurance. The buyer should verify this information with the bank or insurance company.
- Check for flat tires or missing wheels, lights, or radio; expired or missing license plate; stripped interior or missing motor; and heavy dust or debris on the windshield.