

# DETECTING COLLECTOR CAR THEFT



**Although hundreds of cars are stolen every day, automobile thieves usually target late-model vehicles that can be disassembled and quickly sold for parts. Often a car can be worth far more parted out than as a complete vehicle, although occasionally more expensive cars are stolen in order to be kept whole.**

Collector cars are stolen from time to time, but they tend to be harder to resell and the parts are often more difficult to market. If you're careful and take a few simple precautions, the chances are you'll never have to face an empty garage or parking space where your collector car should have been. However, if someone wants your car badly enough they'll probably succeed.

## **NETWORK KEY POINT 1**

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Always think of your safety and the safety of those with you before attempting to thwart a car theft or car-jacking.

## **THE LAYERED APPROACH**

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**There are many things you can do to keep your car safe from theft or tampering.**

Some are simple and some are more complicated. The basic approaches can be divided into common-sense security, theft deterrents and theft prevention. Think of them as layers of protection: The more of these tips you follow, the more likely your car is to remain safely in your possession. We recommend them all.

Some of the approaches to deterring or preventing theft may require modifications to your collector car. If you drive it regularly and enjoy it on the road, you may not object to additional wiring, a few extra holes, or etched glass or other markings on components. Although several clubs make originality concessions for safety – seatbelts, turn signals, modern wiper blades and fire extinguishers – usually only battery cut-off switches are overlooked in the theft-prevention area.

As a result, if you do plan on installing an alarm or other deterrent in a car you intend to show, consider consulting with a restorer to determine the most discrete way to install any devices. However, if you plan on showing your car at anything more competitive than a local club level, any visible changes may hurt your chances in judged contests.

You should always keep your collector car in a closed and locked garage. It's also a good idea to have blinds or curtains on all windows to keep potential thieves from knowing what's inside.





You should only leave your collector car outside when you're actively working on it or using it. Otherwise, it should be locked in your garage.

## LAYER 1: COMMON-SENSE SECURITY

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**These basic security ideas may strike you as incredibly obvious, but they can really help keep your car exactly where you put it.**

### **At Home:**

- Lock your garage when you're not in it.
- Keep garage blinds or shades closed. Not only will this block prying eyes, it will also limit the effect of sunlight on your car.
- Cover your car. You'll keep it hidden and protect the paint and upholstery.
- Don't leave your keys in the ignition or anywhere else in the garage.

## NETWORK KEY POINT 2

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Always pocket your keys or store them in your home.

When your collector car is parked somewhere away from home, it will be more vulnerable than when it's safely in your garage. Here are a few things you can do:

### **Away From Home:**

- Close the windows (if you have them).
- Lock the doors (if doors and/or locks are fitted).
- Take your keys.
- Never park behind buildings which provide cover for thieves.

Combined, all of these steps will make it harder for a potential thief to steal your car.

### **Check on Your Cars Frequently**

Many collectors and enthusiasts don't have room for all of their cars in their home garage, so they keep them in detached buildings on their property. Often, cars stored away from the family garage aren't checked on as frequently as those stored on the other side of a single door. If your cars are stored where you don't see them daily:

- Be sure to have your cars checked regularly.
- Fit deadbolt locks to all outside doors.
- Install an alarm system.
- Monitor your cars with a closed-circuit camera or web cam.



Although these frequent checks are no guarantee against a theft, regular activity may deter prospective intruders. Plus, with frequent checks and an alarm, you'll be able to report a stolen vehicle promptly, which will increase the chance of recovering the car.

### **NETWORK KEY POINT 3**

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Checking on your cars frequently can help deter theft and enable you to secure any property damage by storm or vandalism and report theft promptly.

## LAYER 2: THEFT DETERRENTS

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**Deterrents don't always stop auto theft, but they do make the task more difficult. Very often a few simple additions can make all the difference in keeping your collector car safe. Although not commonly fitted to collector vehicles, such alterations include:**

- Audible alarms
- Alarm window stickers
- Identification markers on the vehicle (any hidden or visible tags or etching identifying your property)

When an alarm sounds, it may still be possible for the thief to steal the car. But, because the alarm calls attention to your car, most likely the thief will run rather than risk capture. The chance of your car being stolen will decrease significantly if the alarm is tied to an immobilizer that prevents the car from being started and driven.

### NETWORK KEY POINT 4

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Audible alarms are excellent deterrents, especially on collector cars, because they are unexpected.

## LAYER 3: THEFT PREVENTION

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**Anything that delays a thief trying to steal a car is a good thing. Many of these deterrents are relatively inexpensive and may be used without altering your car.**

- Steering wheel locks
- Brake pedal locks
- Removal of ignition rotor, distributor cap or high-tension lead
- Removing the fuel pump fuse
- Disconnecting the battery cable

The Club® steering wheel lock makes your car less susceptible to theft without any modifications to the vehicle.



In addition to preventing wheel theft, you can also slow down anyone attempting to remove brake and suspension parts by fitting wheel locks to most cars that use bolt-on wheels.

Unless you're dealing with an incredibly sophisticated thief or one who has a special reason for targeting your car if it won't start, it most likely won't be stolen. Virtually all methods for preventing a car from starting involve cutting off fuel or electricity.

Some older vehicles already have fuel shut-off valves, and it's possible to install them on other vehicles, although some modification is involved. Cutting off the electricity is quite a bit easier, and there are many ways to approach this:

- Install a battery cut-off switch on the battery terminal.
- Install a remote battery cut-off switch.
- Install an immobilization device designed for theft prevention.

A remote battery cut-off switch is easily installed and will slow down any thief.



## NETWORK KEY POINT 5

If your car won't start, the chances are it won't be stolen.

Most electronic theft deterrent or prevention equipment is better suited to new cars rather than collector vehicles. Unless your car came with an audible alarm, you may be reluctant to install one because most involve altering the car's wiring and drilling a few extra holes. Owners of older cars are often hesitant to make any modifications, but adding an immobilizer could mean the difference between having your car waiting for you or not. The Ravelco™ anti-theft device uses both a module (with a removable plug to activate the device) and a complex shielded harness without color-coding that, according to the manufacturer, has proven impossible to defeat. The principle behind Ravelco is that power to all key components is

The Ravelco™ Anti-Theft Device needs to be wired into your car's electrical system, but ensures that the car won't start when you don't want it to.



channeled through the master unit. With the plug removed, the circuits are broken, preventing current from flowing. As additional protection, because all wires in the Ravelco harness are the same color and within a steel-encased harness, it is incredibly difficult to jump the wires and complete the circuits needed to start the car. For additional information on the Ravelco Anti-Theft Device, visit [www.ravelco.com](http://www.ravelco.com).

## RECOVERING A STOLEN VEHICLE

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**Most people rely on luck and police work to recover stolen vehicles.**

A majority of the time, luck doesn't hold out, and cars aren't recovered or are badly damaged or incomplete when found.

If your car is stolen, it has a better chance of being recovered and the thieves being caught if you report the theft immediately.



Several types of vehicle tracking systems can be installed on a vehicle. When the car, truck or motorcycle is stolen, a transceiver installed in the vehicle can be activated to allow vehicle tracking units in their police vehicles to track it. One such system – Lo Jack™ ([www.lojack.com](http://www.lojack.com)) – is monitored by police departments in 22 states. Newer systems rely on what is called “geo-fencing,” which uses the same technology as commonly available global positioning systems (GPS). When a car equipped with the appropriate transmitter is stolen, it sends a signal that is picked up and relayed via satellite and can be monitored via the Internet.

## NETWORK KEY POINT 6

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A vehicle tracking system can greatly increase the chance that your collector vehicle will be recovered if stolen.

With vehicle tracking systems, the rate of recovery for stolen cars is greatly increased. A sensitive installer can often make it all but impossible to detect the presence of such a system.

## MARK YOUR CAR

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**Although not protection against theft, marking your car glass or other components can help with identifying your property when it is recovered. Here are some examples:**

- Etch initials into glass.
- Engrave initials into plastic and metal parts.
- Paint car components with SmartWater™ (currently available in the U.K. only; [www.smartwater.com](http://www.smartwater.com)), a virtually invisible liquid with a unique forensic pattern that shows under ultraviolet light.
- Apply Data Dots™ ([www.datadotusa.com/index.htm](http://www.datadotusa.com/index.htm)), which are the size of a grain of sand, onto which unique information is laser-etched.
- Mark property or vehicle with DNA ink visible under ultraviolet light.

## NETWORK KEY POINT 7

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Property and vehicles marked discretely or invisibly can be more readily identified if stolen.

## IF YOUR CAR IS STOLEN

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**As soon as you notice your car is gone, call the police.**

Stolen cars are most likely to be recovered in the first few hours. With every passing minute, a car is more likely to be on its way out of state or disassembled to be sold for parts. As a precaution, always have your license plate number, VIN or chassis number, engine number and all relevant identifying information available to assist police.

## NETWORK KEY POINT 8

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If your collector vehicle is stolen, be sure to notify the police immediately to increase the chance of the car or truck being recovered.

Once the police have been notified, it's time to contact your insurance company and let them know the car has been stolen. Make sure to give them all the necessary information that you gave the police:

- Date and time of theft
- Location from where the car was stolen
- Vehicle description
- Vehicle identification or serial number
- License plate number
- Police department you notified

Most owners of collector vehicles will never have to deal with a theft. And with any luck and a little bit of care, you'll probably be able to keep your car out of the clutches of thieves.

With a few precautions, you'll be the only one driving and enjoying your pride and joy.



Hagerty is the premier source for safety and protection information about the collector car hobby. For more information on enhancing your collector car ownership experience, log on to **www.hagerty.com** or call **800-922-4050**.



## Towing & Benefits Program

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