

ARE YOU A VICTIM OF CLONING?

Has your car been cloned? Is that used car you recently bought a clone? How would you know?

A leading vehicle security company is calling for greater awareness of the growing problem of vehicle cloning, so that innocent victims will be less likely to be caught out.

Retainagroup, the leader in security marking and registration services for vehicle manufacturers, believes that the public is still largely unaware of this new kind of vehicle crime, and that understandably, even the police do not know the true scale of the problem. Particularly frightening is that your vehicle might have already been cloned, or the used car that you recently bought could be a clone, without you being aware of it.

Cloning is the vehicle equivalent of identity theft. Criminals replace the number plates on a car – usually stolen - with the registration number of an almost identical car of the same make, model and even colour. Owners of cloned cars often only become aware of the problem when they receive speeding or parking tickets from places they have never visited.

Cloned vehicles are used to commit crime and avoid detection, or simply to get away with speeding and parking fines, congestion charges, or paying for fuel. Criminals will also often sell cloned vehicles using false documents. And there are fears that cloned vehicles could be used in organized crime or even for terrorist activity.

“Cloned vehicles tend to come to light only when it’s too late, and by then, there could be several victims of the crime and a huge financial cost,” said Retainagroup boss, Wendy Rowe. “The owner of a cloned car who receives fines, charges, penalty points or is accused of stealing fuel or involvement in more serious crimes has the difficult task of proving that he or she is innocent. I wonder how many have simply accepted a fine or penalty points rather than challenge the system?”

“If the car is used as a getaway vehicle or in a ram raid, there will be a further victim of the original crime. And if you’re unfortunate enough to ‘buy’ a cloned vehicle, you’ll find that you don’t own it and that you can say goodbye to the money. Even a vehicle provenance check will not necessarily reveal a clone.” Cloned vehicles are also unlikely to have a valid tax disc, no insurance, no MOT and no valid documentation. It is impossible to put a figure on the cost to vehicle owners, the police, insurers and the combined victims of the crime.

A clone is not necessarily stolen or written-off. And there could be more than two vehicles of the same make, model and colour – all with the same registration number.

“People who clone vehicles are up to no good. They have something to hide and don’t want to be detected, so we need to stamp this out,” added Rowe.

Retainagroup gives the following advice to minimize the chances of becoming a victim:

- Secure registration plates with clutch-head screws to make them more difficult to steal. Look out for new types of anti-theft plates that are coming onto the market
- If your registration plates are stolen, report this to the police and obtain a crime reference number
- If you receive a fine or demand from somewhere you have never been, challenge it immediately with the appropriate authorities and the police
- If a vehicle has Retainagroup-marked glass, the unique code should correspond with the registration mark, VIN and other details. Use the 24-hour number etched on the glass to check the International Security Register
- Invest in a vehicle provenance check before buying any used vehicle and if possible, include a document check

Retainagroup’s system of marking vehicle glass and components with a unique code, is a strong theft deterrent and a powerful tool in combating and detecting vehicle cloning. Vehicle and ownership details of marked cars are held by the International Security Register (ISR), owned and operated by Retainagroup. Markings include a 24-hour ‘phone number for the ISR which is used by police, manufacturers, dealers, insurers and the public to check car ownership and police stolen vehicle records. If the etched code does not match a vehicle’s VIN or other identifying marks such as an engine number, this immediately raises suspicion.

www.retainagroup.co.uk
www.theisr.org

Ends.

Note to editors: many vehicles now carry a visible vehicle identification number (VIN) which can be easily read by criminals as well as anyone else. VIN numbers can also be changed and used to falsify documents so that a car can be more easily sold. Unique code marking of glass and other parts linked to the secure registration of owner and vehicle details provides a fast cross-check and can instantly reveal a clone.

About Retainagroup

Since 1982, Retainagroup Ltd. has been marking vehicle glass and components with unique security code numbers and their 24-hour telephone on behalf of many manufacturers including: Alfa Romeo, BMW, Fiat, Ford, Harley-Davidson, Hyundai, Kia, LDV, Lexus, Mazda, Proton, Saab, Skoda, SsangYong, Subaru and Toyota. The Retainagroup security marking and registration system uses state-of-the-art laser technology, stencils with chemical etching, and ultra-destruct and anti-tamper stickers to mark around 700,000 vehicles a year.

Well over 40 million vehicle windows have been marked. Retainagroup also operates the International Security Register (ISR) of over 10 million vehicles. Operating 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, the ISR is used by police, manufacturers, dealers, insurers and the public to check vehicle details, ownership and police stolen vehicle records. Retainagroup has offices and facilities in London and in Ashford, Kent.

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MARK IT – REGISTER IT – RETAIN IT