

RETAINAGROUP COMBATS LATEST VEHICLE CRIME

Reports over the last few days have dramatically focused attention on the changing nature of vehicle crime, highlighting that alarms and immobilisers are sometimes just not enough.

On Friday, eight members of a south London criminal gang were sentenced to a total of 17 years in prison on charges of conspiracy to defraud, forgery, dishonest handling and corruption. The gang, which included a Metropolitan police trainee and a DVLA official, amassed more than £4.5 million laundering stolen prestige cars. Up to 190 vehicles were stolen, sometimes at gun or knifepoint with keys obtained in burglaries and robberies. The identities of the cars were then changed using false registration and VIN plates and false documents.

And at the weekend, the police called for a complete overhaul of the number plate system because of a rise in car cloning. Record numbers of vehicles are being cloned to enable people to commit other crimes and avoid fines. According to police estimates, more than 40,000 sets of number plates were stolen last year – a rise of almost 25 per cent. And in London, almost 90 per cent of drive-away theft from fuel stations is committed in vehicles with stolen plates. The Association of Chief Police Officers Vehicle Crime Intelligence Service (AVCIS) says it has no confidence in the ability of the DVLA licensing system to prevent cloning.

Wendy Rowe, managing director of leading vehicle security experts, Retainagroup commented: "Obtaining keys by theft or deception is now the preferred method of stealing cars, with last week's case illustrating that criminals will go to great lengths, including the use of violence. And the police have rightly highlighted the fact that it is all too easy to clone a vehicle. It isn't even necessary to steal registration plates and it's possible for several vehicles to be on the road all with the same number plate."

Rowe added: "At the lowest level, cloned vehicles are used to avoid speeding fines, congestion charges and paying for fuel, but they are also used by organised criminals who commit much more serious offences."

The Retainagroup system of marking vehicle glass, with an independent code and 24-hour telephone number, and linking owner and vehicle details to the International Security Register (ISR) secure database, effectively combats vehicle crime and despite advances in electronic vehicle security, is now more relevant than ever.

"The south London gang might well have thought twice about stealing Retainagroup-marked and registered vehicles," said Wendy Rowe. "Being in

possession of a vehicle which has had its windows marked with our system poses a very real risk to a thief. Overt marking with an independent and unique code is a very effective deterrent because it immediately identifies that vehicle even if number plates and other means of identification have been changed. The markings on windows are virtually impossible to remove, and criminals would rather not have to go to the trouble and expense of changing all the glass in a car. Even if they did, other information on the ISR could still properly identify the car”

Marking and registration is a proven theft deterrent and the unique code is a powerful tool in helping to detect vehicle cloning in a way that cameras and automatic number plate recognition systems cannot. AVCIS agrees, and is keen to see greater use of repeated overt marking of vehicle glass that is easily visible and readable. Retainagroup markings include the 24/7 `phone number of the ISR, and a single call from the police or any member of the public – day or night – can quickly and easily determine whether there is police interest in the vehicle or if its details do not match those recorded on the ISR.

Retainagroup marking and ISR registration is now used by 14 vehicle manufacturers as standard equipment. Marking is a simple and safe DIY job and a vehicle marking pack can be ordered online for just £24.95 including delivery, at www.retainagroup.com.
www.theisr.org

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, Fiat, Hyundai, Kia, LDV, Lexus, Mazda, Proton, Saab, SsangYong, Skoda, Suzuki and Toyota. Other Retainagroup customers include BMW, Ford, Harley-Davidson and Subaru. 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 55 million vehicle windows have been marked. Retainagroup also operates the International Security Register (ISR) of over eight 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