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It feels like adding insult to injury that at a time when dealers have less cars on the lot, theft and vandalism continues to grow in frequency. Here are some tips and trends from our top-notch provider, **Eyewitness/Stealth Monitoring System**. They are the best at protecting your lot and have been partners with ODS for over 5 years as our preferred security vendor.

FOUR AUTO DEALERSHIP THEFT TRENDS AND THEIR SIDE EFFECTS

It's not your imagination. The year 2020 and into 2021 have seen many more vehicle theft reports and stories than recent years. The [National Insurance Crime Bureau](#) (NICB) reveals the number of auto thefts in 2020 increased almost 10 percent compared with 2019.

4 Key Automotive Dealership Theft Trends

Auto theft and the targeting of certain high value assets is not a new problem facing the dealership space in the US. That said, COVID-19 is responsible for some of the new or growing problems driving auto theft in the US. Among other things, it forced many automotive factories to shut down or reduce their output. As a result, there are fewer vehicles available for sale, parts are not in the market at the same level and dealership operations have also been impacted by new hours, social distancing, and occupancy restrictions. Here are the 4 top trends in theft as a result of these factors:

1. Key Swap

Key swapping is a growing problem, especially at car dealerships. This can cost dealerships millions of dollars in theft and loss, including re-keying and carrying costs.

As auto theft rings and thieves become savvier, they have discovered new ways to exploit vulnerabilities in vehicle technology.

In this popular scheme, thieves will pose as potential buyers and one of the perpetrators will distract the salesperson while another will put a dummy fob in place of the real key. They return the keys to the dealership employee, then arrive at a later time with the real key and drive off in the vehicle. Training and positive control of the key is an essential best practice

Sometimes criminals either are, or are in business with, dealership employees. They find jobs in other parts of the dealership, like preowned vehicles, to use as a front for their operation. With keys on hand, they'll switch them out when no one is looking.

2. Key Fob Mirroring

Key fob mirroring requires a little help from technology and a signal amplifier. This device relays the signal from a wireless key fob to another device that is used to unlock and start the vehicle. It essentially tricks the vehicle into thinking the fob is in your hand.

Criminals may try to copy key fobs while going for a test drive. Fortunately, not many thieves are sophisticated enough to pull this off. However, crime rings tend to have the resources to mirror key fobs. Automakers are aware of this and are working on a way to put key fobs into “inactive” or “sleep” mode to prevent copying. It's an issue with many vehicles, especially preowned.

Service vehicles can be particularly susceptible as they are often not entered into the dealership's key safe or management system. If left out in clear site of a window, stronger systems can mirror that signal and thieves can depart at night, undetected and without a trace other than your missing customer service vehicle.

3. Steering Wheels and Other Auto Parts

Many dealerships have seen a surge in vandalism and theft, especially steering wheels, batteries, wheels, valve stem caps and tailgates. Fewer available workers led to a backlog, which meant producing less inventory. Thus, the automotive industry is experiencing a shortage of steering wheels and other auto parts. Unfortunately, victims can't get a replacement for weeks or months due to these shortages. In addition, with the parts in scarcity and demand maintaining – the value of these parts has increased, and thieves will target them as a source of quick revenue.

Ironically, thefts of auto body parts are contributing to the lack of inventory and rising prices for car parts. NICB Senior VP and COO Jim Schweitzer divulges to [The News Wheel](#) that car parts can be worth more than an intact vehicle.

4. Catalytic Converters

The previously mentioned Insurance Information Institute article highlights a significant rise in documented catalytic converter thefts. There were only 1,298 catalytic converter thefts reported in 2018. That number jumped to 14,433 in 2020!

Unfortunately, catalytic converter theft can be easy and often pulled off quickly. A thief can remove a catalytic converter from a vehicle in less than two minutes. Some can remove it within 60 seconds – which mitigates the risk of being caught.

Catalytic converters contain precious metals, including gold, platinum, palladium or rhodium. Over the last 12 months, the value of these metals has climbed to records highs, driving the number of thefts. [J.D. Power](#) discloses that rhodium can range from \$10,000 to \$21,000 per ounce! Palladium is about \$2,300 and gold runs roughly for \$1,900 per [Car and Driver](#). Because of the high resale value, catalytic converter theft is the most prevalent out of the four trends both at dealerships and in private communities as well.

If you want to protect your lot against theft, as well as monitor slip and falls, employee accidents and more, contact [Chris Horton at \[horton@eyewitnessmail.com\]\(mailto:horton@eyewitnessmail.com\)](#) or at (901) 277-0012 for more information. Please feel free to call Julie for references and for Missouri dealers using [Eyewitness/Stealth Monitoring](#).

CALL MADA FORMS DEPARTMENT FOR COVID-19 PRODUCTS

With the most recent mandates, and rumors of mandates, pertaining to the resurgence of COVID-19, Optimum Dealer Services and MADA still have a reasonable supply of products available for use in your dealerships.

Available are KN95 masks (see flyer to follow), floor signs promoting social distancing, and signs highlighting hand washing and sanitization stations.

For more information, please contact Julie Sells at the information below, or MADA Forms Coordinator, Cathy Imsland, at 1-800-776-6232.

Happy Selling,

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