

# 'I JUST FEEL SO VIOLATED'

## RESIDENT RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT KEYLESS VEHICLE THEFTS

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A Georgetown woman is speaking out about the theft of her locked car in the hopes of preventing similar crimes in the community.

Terri Oliver says her Lexus RX 350 F-Sport vanished from her driveway in the south end overnight on July 21, despite the fact that she always makes sure the doors are locked before heading to bed.

"It was very surreal," she said. "The next morning I was about to log onto a conference call, and I look

out the window and my car's not there. The last thing I thought was that it's stolen."

Oliver isn't alone. She said she's been in touch with another Georgetown woman who had her car stolen the same night.

A video recently released by Halton Police reveals there's been a "staggering increase" of what's known as relay and reprogramming thefts of high-end vehicles in the region, with the majority occurring after midnight in residential driveways. These vehicles are reportedly in high demand and are often shipped overseas.

"The Halton Regional Police Service has committed a large amount of resources to this issue," said Halton police media relations officer Const. Ryan Anderson, noting that

three individuals were arrested in relation to the thefts earlier in July. "Investigators have made these thefts a priority."

Police said they believe the suspect(s) may be using a signal relay device to defeat the vehicle's security system by accessing the signal transmitted by the key fob — often stored by drivers near their front door — and relaying it to a computer.

The captured data is then used to program a blank key fob and start the vehicle.

"I had no idea it was that sophisticated," said Oliver. "Had someone told me a week earlier that this is what they do, I would've done things differently."

Throughout all of Halton, police say they received 66 vehicle theft reports in June — a number



Graham Paine/Metroland

Terri Oliver had her locked Lexus stolen from her driveway, a crime that has become prevalent across Halton lately.

that climbed to 94 in July (as of July 29). Anderson noted that some of these occurrences were unsuccessful theft attempts.

He said Halton Police have embarked on a large-scale public awareness campaign to educate people on further steps that

can be taken to secure their vehicles.

This includes:

- Parking your vehicle in a locked and secured garage;
- Installing an on-board diagnostic blocker;
- Installing a steering wheel lock device;

• Combining the above measures with an after-market GPS tracking device;

- Placing your vehicle key fob inside a radio frequency shielding bag when not in use;
- Equipping your vehicle with an alarm;
- Installing home security cameras that capture the exterior of your residence, including your driveway.

Now, Oliver is working her way through the insurance claim process for both her vehicle and the valuable contents she lost, and hopes that increased awareness of these anti-theft measures will protect others in the community.

"I know they're just material things that can be replaced, and it could've been worse. It could've involved a home invasion or somebody could've been hurt, but I still just feel so violated," she said. "If I can save anyone else from having to go through this ... It's just a horrible feeling."

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