

VARIETY OF METHODS USED TO STEAL VEHICLES

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thefts.

BMW vehicles were the next most popular at 13 per cent, followed by Land Rover (Range Rovers) at 12 per cent, Ford vehicles (F-150 trucks) with eight per cent and Mercedes-Benz with seven per cent.

Wright said these vehicles all feature push-button to start, which makes them vulnerable to the technology-based methods thieves have developed to steal them.

One method, dubbed a relay theft, involves two thieves.

"One will approach the front of your house with a signal relay device. The second thief will be by your vehicle and they will access the handle. This will send a signal from your vehicle, through the signal relay device and it will search for

the key fob inside your house," said Wright.

"Once it finds it, it will relay the signal back out through the relay device and then to another device the thief has and that will reprogram a key that they have in their possession. This is a very quick theft, and it can take place in seconds."

Wright said this type of theft can be defeated by putting your key fob in a signal blocking Faraday Bag; however, this type of theft is declining in popularity.

A second more widely used method involves the thief using a screwdriver to get inside the vehicle, at which point they use a device to plug into the vehicle's on-board diagnostic reader and reprogram a key they have in their possession.

Wright said this method takes longer, about 15 min-

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- Det. Ron Wright

utes, but the thief doesn't need to access the key fob inside the house, so it renders Faraday Bags ineffective.

After being stolen, Wright said, the vehicles are typically shipped to overseas locations where a lack of supply, specifically of mid-size SUVs and pickup trucks, makes these stolen vehicles attractive.

"This truly is organized crime," said Wright. "We have a layer of thieves, a layer of shippers and we have a higher layer of individuals who are involved in actual-

ly exporting them overseas or re-VINing them and reselling them to other criminal elements."

Carolyn McMinn of the Trafalgar Chartwell Residents' Association said her husband's Jeep Grand Cherokee was stolen from their driveway in 2020.

She was told at the time that her vehicle was one of 17 taken across Oakville that night.

"There's real disbelief. It was pretty shocking," said McMinn, thinking back to the theft. "We were like, 'No, no, surely someone hasn't

stolen our car. We live in this lovely little corner of Oakville."

After McMinn reported the vehicle stolen, she said police were up front with her, noting her vehicle was probably in a shipping container at the Port of Montreal and she would never see it again.

McMinn said she parks her vehicle in her garage now and has had police provide information about auto theft prevention for her residents' association's newsletter.

Wright said parking a vehicle in a garage is the best way to keep it safe, since auto theft groups have spotters who drive up and down residential streets looking for certain types of vehicles.

Other preventive tips include getting a steering wheel lock or installing an aftermarket GPS on the ve-

hicle so if it is stolen it can be tracked.

When asked by resident Arun Bhat what police are doing to prevent future auto thefts, Wright noted Halton police conduct investigations into vehicle thefts and partner with other police agencies to combat auto theft groups.

Halton police said of the 867 auto thefts in Halton in 2021, a total of 204 of these cases were cleared.

Wright said police also conduct proactive patrols of areas that either have been or are likely to be targeted by auto thieves.

For more theft prevention tips, visit <https://www.haltonpolice.ca/en/staying-safe/vehicle-theft-prevention-tips.aspx>.

STORY BEHIND THE STORY: With a significant increase in vehicle thefts in Halton, we wanted to let residents know what makes are being targeted, how thieves are stealing them and what residents can do to keep their vehicles safe.



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