

Stop advertising to thieves says AA Insurance

Auckland – 16 July 2009 – Over a third of people (34 percent) say they leave personal possessions like bags or CDs visible in the car, according to the 2009 AA Insurance Drivers Index. AA Insurance surveyed 3,708 New Zealand drivers aged 18-65 for the index. Furthermore, 31 percent say these possessions are visible from outside the car.

“Thieves will always go for the easiest, fastest option. If you leave valuable possessions visible in your car you’re really just laying bait for thieves,” says Martin Fox, Deputy General Manager, AA Insurance.

“Our claims department reports a new trend for people to be aware of,” adds Martin. “Navmans and other GPS systems are popular targets. With prices ranging from \$500 to \$1,200, that’s good resale value for thieves. This trend will increase as more people purchase GPS devices. If your GPS system has a removable cradle or charger then hide it or take it with you when you leave the car, because seeing the charger or cradle advertises the presence of a GPS unit to the thief.

“Also, lock your boot even when you’re driving. Recently one of our customers had her boot opened while she was waiting at a red light and the thief took off with five thousand dollars worth of gym gear and accessories.”

According to the New Zealand Police, “theft-ex-car” (theft of property from a car but not the car itself) is now the second most recorded offence in the country. There are on average over 50,000 thefts from a car a year and this accounts for almost 12 percent of total recorded crime in New Zealand. Some 66 percent of these thefts occurred when the car was parked on a “public road, street, or public place” and only one in five vehicles broken into on private property was locked. ¹

Some 17 percent of those surveyed for the 2009 AA Insurance Drivers Index had experienced a car break-in. Of these, 31 percent of the break-ins occurred in a public car park, 26 percent in the driver’s home or nearby street and 21 percent in the driver’s garage, carport or driveway.

¹ Cinco, J, (2008) *Identifying the risk factors in theft ex-car offending in New Zealand*, New Zealand Police Research Symposium

Asked what was taken from the car in the most recent theft, people said:

- Stereo equipment installed in the car –16 percent
- Handbag/wallet/purse – 12 percent
- Sunglasses – 10 percent
- CDs, MP3 players and portable audio devices – 10 percent
- Clothing – 9 percent
- Sports equipment – 6 percent
- Mobile phone – 5 percent

Some 31 percent of people said these items would have been visible to passersby.

Extra security for your car

Of those people who had experienced theft from their car, 37 percent believed they could have done more to prevent the theft. However, only 16 percent upgraded the car's security after the theft.

The most popular form of car security of those surveyed is a car alarm, with 25 percent of people having an alarm. This was followed by an immobiliser (24 percent) and a security coded or removable stereo system (23 percent). However, some 26 percent of those surveyed have no additional security other than locks for their car.

When it comes to deciding which car to purchase, security features aren't a high priority for most people.

When looking to buy a car, 37 percent of people did not investigate its security features, and 32 percent of people said they had thought about security features "a little".

Basic security: locking the car

The majority of people (85 percent) always lock the car even if leaving it only for a short period.

People who sometimes left the car unlocked did so parked outside at home (25 percent), in the garage at home (23 percent), at the service station (22 percent), or at the supermarket or at work (both 12 percent). Some 70 percent of those surveyed are apprehensive about leaving their car in an unfamiliar street.

Running around money

The index asked people what possessions they regularly carry with them and the results suggest that many carry hundreds if not thousands of dollars worth of possessions on any given day.

- Mobile phone – 95 percent
- Sunglasses or reading glasses – 78 percent
- Camera – 25 percent
- Jewellery or watch worth over \$1,000 – 20 percent
- Laptop computer – 16 percent
- Portable audio equipment/MP3 player – 16 percent

“It’s a salient reminder that these days we often forget what we’re carrying with us,” says Martin. “If you were carrying around \$1,000 in cash you’d do your best to be careful with it. Yet somehow we are not so vigilant when it comes to looking after familiar possessions, even though they may be worth hundreds or thousands of dollars.”

Tips for preventing car break-ins from AA Insurance

1. Don’t display your belongings – it’s advertising to thieves. AA Insurance estimates that approximately 20 percent of glass damage to cars is caused by thieves gaining entry to the car to obtain items they can see.
2. When your car is parked, lock it – even if it’s in your home garage, or parked on your street. This includes the boot and, if you have one, the sunroof.
3. Keep valuables (eg wallet, mobile, iPods) on you – not in the glove box or under a seat. Thieves know to check the glove box.
4. Keep bags, gym gear and coats locked and out of sight in the boot.
5. Park in busy, open, well-lit areas. Use an attended, secure parking building if you can.
6. Take the detachable faceplate of your stereo with you – without this the stereo is worthless. Keep a record of your car stereo’s serial number.
7. Remove cradles and chargers for navigation systems and cellphones from your dashboard.
8. Keep your vehicle keys with you and spare keys at home or work. Don’t hide a spare key on the car – thieves will find it.
9. Tell your neighbours if your vehicle has been broken into at your home – thieves often target vehicles in the same street.
10. Consider installing additional security to your car such as an alarm, immobiliser or removable stereo.

ENDS

About AA Insurance

AA Insurance was launched in 1994 and is a joint venture between New Zealand Automobile Association and Suncorp-Metway Limited.

AA Insurance has over 300 staff servicing 150,000 plus customers and manages over 300,000 policies. Over half of those policies cover motor insurance risks including cars, bikes, caravans and motor homes, and the remainder are house and contents insurance.

In 2008, AA Insurance was a finalist in the unlimited/JRA Best Places to Work Survey in the medium-large workplace category, making it one of the top places to work in New Zealand.

AA Insurance Limited has an A+ (Strong) Insurer Financial Strength Rating given by Standard and Poor's (Australia) Pty Ltd on 8 January 2009. For further information visit www.aainsurance.co.nz.

About the 2009 AA Insurance Drivers Index

The 2009 AA Insurance Drivers Index is an independent internet survey of 3,708 drivers aged 18 to 65 from around New Zealand.

For more information please contact:

Victoria Spence, Botica Butler Raudon Partners, (09) 303 3862, 021 403 503 or email victorias@botica.co.nz