



A guide for SMEs:

# HOW TO PROTECT YOUR BUSINESS FROM VAN THEFT

# Contents

Do you know which vehicle is the most frequently stolen in the UK?	3
Are my vans at risk?	4
Four minutes and it's gone - how thieves get their hands on your vans	5
Lock picks, jammers and OBD re-programmers - the modern thief's armoury	6-7
The cost of vehicle theft	8-9
Stopping the thieves in their tracks	10-11
Research your fleet	12
Making anti-theft precautions affordable	13



Do you know  
which vehicle is  
most frequently  
stolen in the UK?

The chances are, you guessed it was a German luxury car like the BMW 7 series, the Audi A5 or the Mercedes ML.

While thieves frequently target these cars, the vehicle at the top of their shopping lists is rather more humble. It's the Ford Transit.

Nor is it the only LCV that's disappearing from driveways across the UK. The Mercedes Sprinter regularly makes the top 10 of most stolen vehicles, with the Volkswagen Transporter rarely far behind.

And when they go walkabout, the damage to your business can be significant. Not only do you lose productive time that should be spent on the road, but you've also got to deal with the hassle of informing the police and your insurers before you can even think of finding a replacement vehicle.

Worse, if your stolen van was full of expensive tools, the inconvenience and replacement costs rocket.

Luckily, there are measures you can take to protect your vehicles and significantly reduce the chance of them being stolen.

# Are my vans at risk?

If you own vans, thieves will have their eyes on them. While the Ford Transit most often disappears from driveways, parking lots and forecourts, all makes of LCV are at risk - as you can see from this chart of most-stolen vans in the UK.

Most stolen vans and commercial vehicles, by percentage of thefts	
Ford Transit	17.6%
Land Rover	17.6%
Mercedes Sprinter	11.8%
Volkswagen Transporter	11.8%
Fiat Ducato	5.9%
Ford Ranger	5.9%
Nissan Navara	5.9%
Peugeot Expert	5.9%
Renault Trafic	5.9%
Vauxhall Vivaro	5.9%
Nissan Navara	5.9%

Source: [www.rammobile.com/NewsArticle/Latest-Vehicle-Theft-Statistics](http://www.rammobile.com/NewsArticle/Latest-Vehicle-Theft-Statistics)

In fact, some vans are so desirable that there are reports of them being stolen within hours, and sometimes minutes, of being delivered to new owners.

Worse, new techniques used by thieves mean that some vehicles can be stolen, started and driven away in under four minutes - without breaking a single pane of glass, bending any door panel or cutting through any locks.

When you learn how easy it is for a thief to steal your vehicles, we're certain you'll start looking at van security in a whole new light.

# Four minutes and it's gone - how thieves get their hands on your vans

Take a look at these government statistics on vehicle theft. They make surprising reading.


Percentages	1995	2001/02	2006/07	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Offender forced lock / tried to (attempts)	65	61	51	22	25	17	25
Offender broke window / tried to (attempts)	13	17	20	14	10	12	7
Door was not locked	3	7	10	9	11	16	6
Offender forced / broke / bent/prised door	...	...	3	3	0	0	0
Offender used a key	9	12	15	46	41	46	43
Window was left open	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Other	12	6	5	11	13	15	20

Source: ONS, Nature of Crime tables, 2014/15 - Vehicle related theft.  
(Note, percentages do not add up to 100 because respondents could provide up to two options.)

As you can see, there are two stand-out trends. While the number of thieves forcing the locks on vehicles has dropped steadily over the last 17 years, the percentage of criminals using a key has increased exponentially - now accounting for almost half of all thefts.

While some of these 'key thefts' are down to vehicle owners being careless with their keys, or criminals using wire to 'fish' them through letterboxes, there's a more sinister explanation for others - the easy availability of lock picks on the internet.

Let's take a look at them, and some of the other tricks of the modern van thief.



# Lock picks, jammers and OBD reprogrammers - the modern thief's armoury

## 1. Lock picks

Go and type 'Tibbe lock pick' into Google video search.

The videos you'll find will show you how to break into a Ford Transit van in minutes, using a specialised lock pick available online for just over £50.

These tools allow any amateur to gain access to any unmodified van with a Tibbe lock. You could order one today and start a van theft spree tomorrow.

It's not just Ford Transits that are vulnerable. Lock picks are available for all kinds of vehicles - ranging from specialist picks to versatile tools that can be used on a range of different vans.

That said, increasing numbers of criminals don't even bother to pick your locks. They've got even simpler technology that prevents you from locking your van in the first place - lock jammers.

## 2. Lock jammers

You lock modern vans remotely using an electronic signal transmitted by your key fob.

It's an elegant way of locking a vehicle, and it quickly becomes second nature. Hop out the van, press the button on your key fob and head off - without so much as looking back at your vehicle.

Thieves know this, and that's why they're increasingly using lock jammers to prevent you from securing your van. They target your vehicle, wait for you to get out of it and then activate their special lock jammer device.

This sends out a strong electronic signal that blocks the signal transmitted by your key fob. So you leave the vehicle thinking you've secured it, but the thieves have actually tricked you into leaving it unlocked.

## 3. OBD re-programmers

It might be easy for thieves to gain access to your van, but surely they can't start it up and drive it away? The days of being able to hotwire vehicles have gone, right?

Wrong. Criminals can plug a laptop or code reader device into your vehicle's onboard diagnostics (OBD) port and clone your wireless key fob. It takes a minute or two at most - meaning your van can be stolen in the time it takes you to pop out for a cup of coffee.

In the news:

[Thieves target Mercedes vans to steal their exhaust systems and catalytic converters >](#)

Source: Mirror 24/10/2015

## 4. Catalytic converter / spare wheel theft

These are not hi-tech crimes, but they're increasingly common ones – especially in the current economic climate. Catalytic converters on many vans are held in place by four nuts, meaning they can be stolen in minutes. Spare wheels are usually equally insecure, and are being stolen in increasing numbers.



# The cost of vehicle theft

Now you've seen how easy it is to steal your vans and equipment, it's worth thinking about the impact this very real threat can have on your business. As well as the hassle of dealing with insurers to get your vehicle replaced, you can be hit by these additional costs as well.

## 1. Tool replacement

Tools are expensive. If your van is driven off with all your tools on board, or only the tools themselves are stolen, you face a major bill. The average collection of manual and power tools in a trade vehicle can be worth thousands, if not tens of thousands of pounds. Even if they're insured, it can take weeks to source and order replacements.

## 2. The cost of catalytic converters

A catalytic converter for a Mercedes Sprint could cost you £2,000, so this is a theft that can hit your business hard. It can get very expensive too – some insurers will pay for replacements for a maximum of only two thefts. Then you're on your own.



### 3. Vehicle downtime

When a van is stolen, it hits your productivity hard. If your business is a small one, you may even find yourself unable to serve customers - and that can damage your reputation and drive away future business.

### 4. Rising insurance premiums

If your vans are stolen, your insurance premiums rise – making it more expensive to run your fleet at a time when margins are increasingly tight.

### 5. Administration costs

Dealing with insurers, sourcing replacement tools, hiring temporary vehicles, reporting theft to the police, organising road tax refunds, taxing and insuring a replacement vehicle - when van theft occurs it leaves you with a sea of red tape, which eats into valuable time that ought to be spent on growing your business.

# Only 38%

of LCVs stolen in the UK are restored to their owners. Just a third of Ford Transits are returned.

Source: [Tracker.co.uk](http://Tracker.co.uk)



So how do you keep your fleet secure at a time when vehicle crime is getting faster, cheaper and more sophisticated?

Fortunately, crime prevention technology is keeping one step ahead of the thieves. So if you want to prevent your business being hit by van theft, we recommend you implement the following measures.

## 1. Change the locks

If your vehicles have vulnerable locks, replace them with anti-pick replacement cylinders. Choose models that have been endorsed by the [Thatcham Motor Insurance Repair Research Centre](#) or by [Sold Secure](#). These products have been subjected to high intensity security testing, guaranteeing the highest levels of deterrence.

You can also install additional locks to protect tools and prevent access via all doors. Look for accredited slamlocks that automatically lock doors when they are shut, ensuring you don't fall victim to thieves armed with lock jammers. Other lock technologies include slamplates, that add an extra layer of protection over manufacturers' door handles, and deadlocks, that improve security by adding extra locking points – helping to keep both your vans and their contents safe.

## 2. Install a CATLOC®

Catalytic converter theft is rising rapidly as thieves cash in on these easy-to-remove components containing valuable metals such as platinum or gold. You can protect your catalytic converter by installing the [CATLOC®](#) ISR® security system, a Police Approved, Thatcham Accredited catalytic converter marking and registration system. This etches a unique code into the CAT which is recorded onto the ISR®, which allows the CAT to be traced back to the vehicle. It can assist with securing convictions and acts a strong deterrent towards would-be purchasers of the stolen CAT.

## 3. Use an OBD protection device

If you use the Ford Connect, Fiesta or Transit models in your fleet, be sure to fit an [ECU/OBD protection device](#). These prevent thieves from plugging in a laptop or PDA to override your vehicle's immobilisation system and driving away within minutes.

## 4. Make use of tracking (GPS) or telematics services

If you use GPS or telematics services to track your fleet, they provide an extra line of defence against theft. While professional thieves will know where to find a GPS device and remove it before driving off, many opportunist thieves will not. If they steal your vehicle, you can then track its whereabouts and alert the police.

## 5. Think 'thief'

Take simple precautions that make the thieves' lives more difficult. Keep an eye out for people working under cars, park in safe and well-lit places and make sure your drivers are trained to lock doors behind them every time they leave the vehicle. Remember, a van can be stolen in minutes – far less time than it takes a driver to buy a newspaper.

**Tip:** Most LCVs are stolen from residential areas, particularly at night and on weekdays. Ensure your drivers are aware and security features are used.

# Research your fleet

Did you know there's a popular LCV on the market that has an insecure central locking system? You simply have to remove the brake light on the rear to get at it. There's another that has an insecure ECU / OBD port that can be accessed easily via a quarter light.

Another problem comes when you realise that European legislation means manufacturers can't force you to take your vans to an authorised dealer. So they can't lock down your OBD port using software, meaning you need to fit an aftermarket protection device. Similarly, body panels can be so thin on modern vehicles you can cut locks out with something as primitive as a tin opener.

Also, when a manufacturer does realise there's a security issue with a van, the nature of the production line makes it very costly to put it right – so more often than not, they don't.

For these reasons, it's always a good idea to research the security vulnerabilities of each vehicle type in your fleet – or speak to either a vehicle security expert or major lease hire operator to get up-to-date knowledge about vans and the latest theft techniques.

It's an approach that certainly pays off if you own your fleet – the resale value of compromised vehicles is almost certain to be lower. Of course, if you source your LCVs via flexible leasing, you can ask your provider to make necessary security updates or even replace your vehicles as necessary.

# Making anti-theft precautions affordable

Compared to the cost of stolen vans and tools, all the security devices we have recommended are sensible investments.

But there's no getting away from the fact that, by the time you've added new locks, slamplates, CAT guards, OBD protection devices, GPS and other security measures, the unit cost of your vehicle increases significantly.

And if you've got a fleet of 10, 50, 100 or more vans, you're looking at a major capital cost to upgrade the security of all your vehicles.

However, there is one way to make vehicle security much more affordable - and that's by leasing your fleet.

If you source your vans using a contract or flexible hire package, you can take advice on which LCVs are the most secure. Some firms are also willing to install your chosen security features for a minimal addition to your monthly hire fee. It's a great way to share the responsibility for your fleet security - hire companies have a vested interest in you returning their vehicles intact at the end of your contract period.

And if the worst does happen and a van is stolen, the hire company can also supply you a replacement vehicle so your productivity doesn't suffer.

There's a catch of course - you need to find the right vehicle hire company, because not all of them have the expertise or willingness to provide the stress-free security modifications you need.

To help you find the right commercial hire company for your business, we've created a free guide - [10 questions to ask a potential LCV fleet hire provider](#). Download it today and it could save you a lot of money, not to mention hassle - as well as giving you peace of mind that your vehicles are secure.

# What next?

Get vehicles with the security you need  
for minimal cost by setting up an account today

Set up account

**Enterprise Flex-E-Rent**  
Flex-E-Rent House  
Knights Way  
Battlefield Enterprise Park  
Shrewsbury  
SY1 3AB

Website: [flexerent.co.uk](http://flexerent.co.uk)  
Email: [FER\\_info@ehi.com](mailto:FER_info@ehi.com)  
Phone: 0800 328 9001

