

Risk Insights

Advice for you and your business

Auto Dealer Security



Thefts from auto dealerships occur frequently in both urban and rural areas. Serious consideration should be given to all aspects of dealership security, and preventive measures should be taken wherever possible. Every business and situation will be different however, we have included key areas to address and have provided some common tips to reduce the risk of theft.

Building Protection

Based on past experience, a building alarm system should be considered mandatory. There are numerous types available, but the most typical for auto dealerships include:

- Alarms monitored off premises
- ULC listed station with line security (cellular back-up or IP systems).
- Motion detectors, door contacts, and glass sensors.

Perimeter Protection

Protecting the land around your building can be just as important as protecting the building itself. One of the most common ways to protect the perimeter is with fencing. Things to consider include:

- A chain link fence topped with barbed wire.
- Galvanized steel posts set in concrete.
- Entrances should have strong metal gates with professional-grade padlocks.
- When the locks are not in use, they should be locked on the fence or taken indoors for safe storage.
- While in use, keep the padlocks inside metal boxes to prevent being cut or use shrouded padlocks. If chain is used to lock the gate, it should be a minimum 3/8-inch grade 70 transport chain (difficult to cut with a bolt cutter).
- Pre-cast Concrete blocks or Jersey barriers or deep ditches can be utilized to restrict vehicle movement.

Other methods of protecting the perimeter can include decorative boulders (armour stone) or posts set in concrete instead of fencing, spaced so that a vehicle could not be driven between them, the same for chain link fencing.

Exterior Lighting

- Brightly lit areas are considered one of the best theft deterrents. The lighting should be as bright as possible and kept at full power throughout the night.

Video Surveillance System

A variety of surveillance systems exist and finding the one most appropriate for you and your business is key. Some things to consider are:

- The exterior can be protected by video surveillance system and monitored locally using digital video recorders (DVR) or network video recorders (NVR).
- DVRs & NVRs offer large recording capacities and may allow personal offsite supervision via the Internet.
- DVRs should be protected from physical damage, tampering and theft. (i.e. Hide it, use a DVR lockbox, control access to DVR room.
- Video recordings are typically stored from 3 to 30 days, depending on the area being monitored and the intended application. Consider retaining footage for as long as your storage capacity will allow.

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- Video recordings can be backed up and accessed via the internet using a Cloud storage or FTP server services. If internet service bandwidth is an issue, redundant DVRs can be used to provide backup.
- The system utilizing motion activated cameras, is much more efficient when supervised by a monitoring station. The intruders are immediately detected, and a vocal message sent from the station asks them to leave the facility. Sophisticated systems have license plate/face zooming capabilities.
- Signs should be posted notifying visitors that there is video surveillance of the premises. This will discourage some thieves.

Security Patrol or Watchman

- Dealerships can hire security patrols or watchmen for regular and frequent patrols after business hours. Sharing the cost with other local businesses helps keep expenses low.

Vehicles in Storage

- High performance and sports automobiles are target stock and should be surrounded by less expensive cars to prevent theft.
- A large variety of anti-theft devices are now available to secure vehicles.
- All alloy wheels should be protected by proper wheel lock nuts.

Display Ramps

- Cars have been stolen by simply being towed off the display ramps onto the beds of dump trucks.
- Display ramps should have metal bars or edges, of at least 1-foot in height, on the front and rear sides, just at the face of the tires.

Key Control

- Keys should always be stored inside locked metal cabinets. The cabinets should be located in well-supervised areas, which are not easily accessible or visible to the public. The second set of keys should be kept inside a locked filing cabinet or on a board within a locked office. The second set of keys could also be taken home nightly by the owner/principal of the dealership, if feasible.
- Similar attention should be paid to the keys of customers' cars being serviced in the garage or body shop.

- Do not use keyboards in accessible areas.
- Keys should never be left inside the showroom cars.
- Car window key lock boxes should never be used.
- A computer system like *KeyTrak* or *Matrix* key control systems can be used to hold vehicle keys. These systems allow for monitoring of which keys are out, whom they were taken by and returned and only allows for one key to be removed at a time.

Test Drives

There has been a significant increase in criminals posing as potential buyers to test drive vehicles, then fleeing during the test drives. This trend has targeted both commercial dealerships and private sellers. Here are some tips to mitigate against these types of losses.

- Educate employees on the screening process of potential buyers. Record detailed information prior to any test drive or viewing.
- Encourage employees to take part in all test drives with the potential buyer/client when possible. If unable to, ask for a piece of identification from the individual before they take the vehicle out.

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