

## “Don’t let a rat ruin your day”



“RATS” are vermin and Surrey Police is on a mission to exterminate them from the streets of the county. That is the message to vehicle crime offenders today as the Force launches a new advertising campaign and increases its proactive operations that target known individuals.

During the months of April and May offenders take advantage of the seasonal demands to steal bags and cash by the opportunities presented by victims leaving vehicles unlocked. Offenders are also influenced by high scrap metal prices, resulting in catalytic converter thefts.

Although the Force has been achieving positive results since 2009, with a 15% reduction in Theft from a Motor Vehicle (TFMV) and a 23% reduction in Theft of a Motor Vehicle (TOMV), there is a determination to make further reductions in our ruthless pursuit of criminals.

Bus backs and billboards will be placed around the county, displaying artwork of rats breaking into a vehicle (image attached). Our successful video and radio advertisements from last year’s campaign ‘In the mind of a car thief’, currently nominated for a prestigious SONY Radio Academy Award, will also re-run. CCTV images of unknown individuals committing vehicle crimes will be distributed to the media to appeal for the public’s help in identifying them.

Additional patrols will target hotel and beauty spot car parks where many thefts occur. Officers dedicated to the operation from the Roads Policing Unit and Safer Neighbourhoods teams will work alongside officers from CID and Intelligence targeting known offenders. The Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) team will stop vehicles which are known to have been stolen or have links to offenders and our Scenes of Crime Officers (SOCOs) will play a crucial role in apprehending those responsible from forensic clues they leave behind.

Similar vehicles are targeted for both TOMV and TFMV offences, and in particular the transit and sprinter van is popular among thieves for tools and catalytic converters.

Statistics show offences are most prominent overnight between 11pm – 3am and offenders are most likely to be male, in their late teens to early 20's who reside locally.

Temporary Superintendent Darren McInnes, Force lead on vehicle crime, said: "Having your car stolen or broken into is an upsetting experience and can cause a great deal of inconvenience and expense. But most vehicle crime incidents can be prevented by taking a few simple steps.

"Our advice to motorists is to never leave your vehicle in a vulnerable position. Always close the windows, lock the doors and remove personal possessions. Particular care should be taken with sat navs, laptops, ipods and mobile phones, where quite often the value to the victim is often enhanced by the inconvenience of losing the equipment and the information held on it.

"Reducing vehicle crime is a top priority for Surrey Police in our ruthless pursuit of criminals. As part of this latest crackdown we are increasing patrols day and night, working closely with our intelligence and scenes of crime teams and targeting individuals who are believed to be involved in vehicle crime."

Surrey residents can help to reduce vehicle crime and therefore avoid becoming a victim by following these simple steps:

- Always close windows and sunroofs and always lock your car, even when you leave it for just a few moments
- Don't leave anything inside your car. Thieves love sat navs, mobile phones and bags, but clothes, cigarettes and loose change can all encourage a break in
- Sat nav theft is common. So always remove the system and the cradle, and wipe away any suction marks left on the windscreen
- Look after your car keys and keep them out of sight, even when you are at home. Never leave them in view of a letterbox or window
- To help avoid your car being 'cloned' secure your number plate with anti-tamper or clutch head screws
- When away from home, always try to park in a well lit, open location or in a car park displaying the 'ParkMark' logo
- Drive a van? Keep it locked, even when driving, and always remove tools and equipment at night
- If you drive a vehicle with 'high clearance' such as a 4WD or a van, you may be at risk of catalytic converter theft. Mark yours to deter thieves
- Keep an eye out for potential car criminals. If you see someone looking inside cars, or trying car door handles call Surrey Police on 101. In an emergency always call 999.

***Call 101 for all non-emergency policing matters.***

***Call 999 if you have a genuine emergency requiring the attendance of the police (eg a crime is in progress or someone is in immediate danger).***

***Call the independent charity Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111 if you have information about a crime and don't want to leave your name.***