



Travelers Auto Dealership BOLO Alert

“Be On the Look Out” to manage risk.

LOCATION: PA, NY, NJ & Eastern US

SOURCE: National Insurance Crime Bureau; US Department of Homeland Security; New Jersey State Police, Federal Bureau of Investigation; Travelers Investigative Services

“Use of VIN numbers obtained from the internet” identified as cause of Thefts from Dealerships

Travelers has received information from Federal & State law enforcement agencies showing a growing trend of new inventory vehicle thefts from Auto Dealership lots. Information received notes criminal elements to be utilizing **Vehicle Identification Numbers** obtained through Auto Dealership & Manufacturer websites to obtain duplicate keys for vehicles with thefts being perpetrated at night while the dealerships are closed.

Investigations by law enforcement into recent vehicle thefts have confirmed this activity to be occurring from dealerships in PA, NJ and NY, based on intelligence & the recoveries of vehicles attempting to be exported out of the United States. Many dealerships utilize their websites to post detailed information about their new vehicle inventory, including VIN's. Public access to new inventory VIN's via dealership websites is believed to increase the probability that thieves will utilize this information during the course of auto theft crimes against dealerships.

“Increase in Wheel & Tire Thefts” identified as impacting of Dealerships

In addition, Travelers has been notified of an increasing trend in tires & wheel thefts from new vehicle inventories at Auto Dealerships along the east coast. Thieves are targeting high end SUV's, and specifically GM vehicles with larger chrome wheels and tires including: Cadillac Escalade, GMC Yukon/Denali, Chevrolet Tahoe & Suburban. In some instances, thieves are loosening lug nuts one night and returning to steal the wheels the following night. This poses a significant safety issue should the vehicle be operated in this condition. Intelligence suggests thieves are now targeting dealerships located in rural areas.

Recommendations

In an effort to reduce exposure to this scheme, auto dealerships should consider blocking or the removal of VIN's their new vehicle inventory websites. While customers frequently utilize VIN's to profile a vehicle or complete CARFAX or related searches about vehicle history prior to purchasing used vehicles, there is minimal benefit to the customer to provide VIN's of new vehicle inventory on line. The following actions are recommended by Law Enforcement, the National Insurance Crime Bureau and Travelers to assist in the prevention of thefts from Auto Dealerships:

- Consider use of surveillance equipment as a deterrent and to secure potential evidence to be utilized for criminal prosecution should an arrest be made.
- Improve lighting in the areas where vehicle inventories stored.
- Improve lighting in the entrance and exit areas of the dealership.
- Consider improving security of entrance and exit areas through use of secured gates.
- Location of all drop box areas should be secured to prevent thieves from easy access to keys.
- Use of lock boxes on vehicle windows increases the probability the vehicle will be targeted.
- Inventory key boards should be kept secure with no access by customers.
- Perform frequent inspections of wheels on high end vehicles to ensure lug nuts have not been tampered with or removed.

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