

Arson Prevention **Car Fires**

The Continuing Problem... And How to Help Extinguish It

Every year in the UK around 93,000 road vehicles (or about 250 every day) go up in flames and about 75 people die as a result.

80% of car fires are started deliberately to cover criminal activity or as an act of vandalism. One in 12 reported stolen vehicles will be set on fire.



Crime and arson

45% of vehicle arson occurs in road vehicles that have previously been reported stolen. Your car is a target for crime and therefore a possible target for arson. However, a little care and forethought can reduce the risk of your car being stolen, and perhaps set on fire.

Follow the simple checklist below every time you leave your car.

Check List

- **Where to leave your car**

At night, park in a well-lit place. Thieves like working in shadows, so avoid poorly lit areas. In a ticket-exit car park, take the ticket with you and always try to use a secured car park.

- **Remove the ignition key**

Don't leave the key in the ignition – not even for just a few seconds to go into your home, a shop or pay for petrol.

- **Close all windows**

When you leave the car, close windows. Don't forget the sun roof.

- **Always lock doors and boot/tailgate**

Even when the car is in your own drive or garage, lock it and take the keys with you.

- **Fit and use anti-theft devices**

Thieves are opportunists, so they will probably move on to a car without a device fitted. Vehicle tracking systems can help trace your vehicle in the event of it being stolen.

- **Report abandoned cars to the police**

45% of vehicle arson occurs in abandoned cars. Reporting an abandoned car to the police could help someone else get their car back intact, and prevent an arson attack.

- **Hide property**

Whenever possible take your property with you when you leave the car. Always ensure any belongings that you are travelling with are locked in the boot. In hatchbacks the rear shelf should always be in position. In an estate car cover property with a blanket.

- **Keep keys in a secure place both at home and at work**

Burglars have been known to break into houses and offices just to steal car keys.

At home, don't be in the habit of leaving your car keys close to the front door where they can be seen.



Accidental vehicle fires

Around 25,000 vehicle fires break out each year accidentally simply due to lack of basic maintenance. These can be prevented by taking the following precautions.

- **Electrical**

Check wiring on a routine basis, watching for signs of wear and tear or damage. All alterations and additions should be carried out in a competent manner - preferably by a qualified mechanic.

- **Petrol**

Routinely check all fuel lines for signs of wear and ensure their connections are reliable.

- **Flammable material**

Modern car interiors are largely composed of polymers, plastics and other synthetic materials – all of which are particularly flammable. The smoke and fumes from the outbreak of fire are highly toxic and can be deadly, if inhaled. Proper disposal of cigarettes and matches will minimise the risk they pose.

If fire breaks out

- Stop
- Get everyone else out of the vehicle
- Switch off engine
- Release bonnet - but do not open
- Get far away from the vehicle and stay away.
- Keep onlookers and others away
- Dial 999 and call the fire brigade
- Warn oncoming traffic
- If you believe it is safe, attempt to put out the fire with a dry powder or foam extinguisher. If the fire is in the engine compartment, do not open the bonnet but aim the dry powder or foam through the radiator grille or under the edge of the bonnet. Use with caution and, if in doubt, do not attempt to tackle the fire
- Never use water on an engine fire - it can short out wiring and spread burning petrol with disastrous effect

Help and advice on protecting yourself against arson can be obtained from your local Fire Brigade, Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership (via the Police) or your insurer.