

Stolen cars go to the 'chop shop'

Car thieves used to concentrate on selling what they stole. Today, however, professional auto theft now involves the business of running "chop shops" that sell untraceable parts.

According to Robert Barber, assistant vice president and manager of property loss for Liberty Mutual Insurance Co., the reason for the growth of chop shops is their high profit, low risk and a high demand for parts.

"Chop shops comprise a sophisticated, stratified industry involving different specialists who perform various tasks resulting in an average 20-minute vehicle dismantlement process," Barber said.

An estimated 25 percent of the 1.09 million vehicles stolen last year — one every 28 seconds — were disposed of in chop shop operations. According to the Automobile Theft Bureau, auto theft losses in 1981 accounted for \$3.3 billion nationwide, with only 58 percent of the cars recovered.

The NAB estimates that 25 percent of auto theft is fraud and another 25 percent results from keys left in the ignition.

to attempt to steal a car in an area with good lighting. Parking in a deserted alley or on a lonely side street poses a danger to both you and your vehicle.

- Always lock the car and take the keys with you, even if you are going to be away from your car for only a few minutes. If you must leave valuables in the car, put them in the trunk, out of sight.
- Close all windows completely when leaving your car. It's better to return to a stuffy car than to an empty parking space.
- Avoid leaving your car overnight in repair shops, parking lots and parking garages. The longer your car is out of your sight and control, the greater the risk of its being stolen.
- Avoid leaving keys with parking lot attendants at public parking lots. It's a simple procedure to have your keys copied. If you must leave them, make sure the attendant is an authorized employee.
- Install an alarm system or other anti-theft device in your car. A variety of these are available, and many can be obtained at a reasonable cost.

On I-94

Call boxes ease drivers' fears

They have helped prevent death and injury, and even played a role in the safe birth of a child. They are used day and night, seven days a week.

They are the 70 motorist aid telephones located every one-third of a mile along both sides of I-94 (Ford) Freeway in Detroit.

Installed in the fall of 1980 by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), the \$1 million system puts motorists with emergencies into direct contact with State Police.

WHEN A MOTORIST picks up a call-box phone, he or she is in immediate two-way communication with the dispatcher at the State Police freeway post in downtown Detroit.

"Nine or 10 patrol cars are on duty at all times, patrolling 62 miles of freeway. A patrol car can arrive at a motorist aid call-box within five to 10 minutes after a call is received.

"You should be on that line and listen sometime," said State Police Sgt. Matthew Hogan, who often monitors the call-box system. "The fear in their voices immediately fades. They know they are not alone anymore."

"The call-boxes are very, very effective," said Lt. Robert Powers, who oversees communications, including motorist aid calls, at the freeway post.

"They greatly reduce the time anyone is exposed to freeway dangers, from being hit by a vehicle to being assaulted," he said.

NEARLY 9,000 calls were made one the phone from March, 1981 when calls were first recorded to August, 1982. Of these, 61 percent, or 5,348, were for general motorist assistance.

"That includes everything from flat tires to someone who has run out of gas," explained Powers. "When we receive these calls, we first ask what they would like us to do. Many motorist ask us to notify a friend or family members to help, and others ask us to call a wrecker.

"We always try to send out a patrol car if someone truly is afraid, especially if there are children in the car, of a woman is alone."

Another percent, or 584 calls during the 17-month period, were reports of accidents, and an additional 87 involved car fires.

POWERS SAID the number of accidents may vary up to 10 or 25 percent clearer weekday to more than 100 on an icy winter day.

"Twenty-two medical emergencies also were reported. One call came from a woman who was having a baby.

Trial lawyers to dine tonight

The Oakland County Chapter of the Michigan Trial Lawyers Association conducts its second meeting from 5:30 to 7 p.m. today in the Holiday Inn, Southfield.

State president George T. Sinas will speak on "No Fault and Other Bad Legislative Proposals Ahead."

The meeting is open to all trial lawyers who are members of potential members of the Michigan Trial Lawyers Association. For information about the group, call Jeffrey N. Shilman at 355-0300.

Men first

It was men only for the first seven years at Wimbledon. Women players didn't compete until 1884.

TO HELP FOIL car thieves:

- Park in well-lighted and well-populated areas only. A thief is less likely

Harrison fills state board post

Robert S. Harrison of Lathrup Village recently was appointed to the State Building Authority Board of Trustees by Gov. William G. Milliken.

Harrison, a Troy attorney, replaces Bernard A. Friedman of Bloomfield Hills who resigned after he was appointed to fill a vacancy in the 46th District Court.

Harrison will serve the remainder of a term which expires Aug. 21, 1985.

AT HOME, take these precautions:

- If you park your car in your garage, lock the door of the garage as well as the door of the car. Protect your vehicle by placing as many obstacles as possible between it and the thief. The more locks and doors the thief has to open, the more difficult it will be to steal the vehicle.
- If you must park on the street, try to park at a variety of locations. Don't invite theft by always having your car parked in the same place at the same time. Predictability is something thieves rely upon.
- If you are taking a trip and leaving your car at home, tell family and friends. Connect some of the light in your house to a timer. This will give the impression that your car has not been left alone.



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