

the crime facts and cost

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The UK market is Europe's capital for car crime. During 2003 a vehicle was broken into and an item removed every 22 seconds that's around 1.43 million vehicles, a further 660,000 vehicle break-ins were attempted. Inner city areas are the highest risk, London, Yorkshire and the Humber, South East, North West and East Midlands being the worst¹.

The laptop has become the number one target for vehicle criminals and has become a commodity in itself. Last year around 100,000 laptops were stolen from vehicles, that's over 270 laptops per day and 6.2% of all vehicle insurance claims were the result of laptop theft². Gartner, the IT research consultancy, have calculated the average laptop theft rate for UK companies to be 5%³. According to Kensington medium and large companies will loose 11.65 notebooks per year due to theft⁴.

The value of stolen laptop computers is underestimated by, in some cases, 1500%. The estimated value is £4,000, however when all aspects of costs are taken into account (loss of employee productivity, theft of confidential business information, lost revenue, lost data, procurement of new hardware and replacement of critical data) the figure nearly triples to £11,500⁵. However, this figure is substantially less than the loss estimated in the CSI/FBI Computer Crime and Security Survey. This study found that companies self reported losses from stolen computers could run as high as £50,000⁶.

❖ the criminal

Police information suggests criminals stealing laptops are very organised, booking into hotels, monitoring the comings and goings of business workers, understanding when and where companies have conferences etc. Gangs frequent motorway service parks, wearing suits and carrying briefcases and using mobile phones, waiting for business people to leave vehicles without carrying a case, a member of the gang will smash the window open the boot and steal the contents.

Police are also worried about recent reports of a scanning device criminals are using that can detect with high accuracy whether a laptop is contained within the boot of a vehicle, possibly from the static charge emitted from the CMOS battery⁷.

❖ references

- 1 Crime in England and Wales 2002/2003
- 2 Claims Plus 2003
- 3 Gartner 2002
- 4 Kensington Notebook Security Survey, October 2002
- 5 Security International 2002
- 6 CSI/FBI Computer Crime and Security Survey, Spring 2001
- 7 Anecdotal evidence