

Classic Car Theft Prevention

- by Bob Nichols

It is official folks. Classic car publications are reporting an increase in old car theft. If you think your Corvair is exempt because it isn't worth as much as a rare classic, think again. Two of our club members have had their Corvairs stolen in the past year.

Old cars are fairly easy to steal. Most do not have steering wheel or shifter locks and the ignition switch wires are easy to get at. In fact it's easy to unlock a car and simply release the hand brake and push it down the street to a trailer or a place it can be started without the owner noticing. While selling a stolen car is difficult, selling the parts is relatively easy. Parts off a car are not traceable (even if you put an ID number on the engine you must first locate it to prove it's yours – this rarely happens).

So how do you protect your Corvair from being stolen?

- Keep your Corvair in a garage at home if possible. (this is almost always required by classic car insurance).
- Install a steering wheel locking bar. (slows down a thief, but it is easy to defeat).
- Install a car alarm. (great if your close to your car, otherwise useless because no one pays attention to a car alarm because of false alerts).
- Install a battery disconnect switch. (simple to install between the battery post and cable, BUT you must put a lock on the engine lid so the thief cannot access the battery). NOTE: this won't prevent a car from being pushed or towed away.
- Hydraulic brake lock. (this requires a professional installation, but you can effectively lock all your wheels to prevent pushing or towing, unless the tow truck has a wheel cradle. One problem is that you must activate the lock while holding the brake pedal down so the lock can be easy to find by a thief).
- LO JACK, this isn't going to stop a theft, but LO JACK equipped cars are found 90% of the time. (LO JACK isn't activated UNTIL YOU CALL THE POLICE, so timely theft reporting is necessary or you could get a stripped car back. The police have equipment to find your car and usually do. LO JACK claims a one time fee (\$600 - \$1,000), but that is for a two year warranty. An unlimited warranty for a long as you own your car is extra (\$100) and does not cover the cost of a recommended inspection every two years or the cost of a new back up battery. Some insurance companies give a discount on LO JACK equipped cars. Not all police departments have LO JACK locating equipment. The major cities in California, Nevada, and Arizona support LOJACK. Check their web site for coverage details.