

THEFT CONTROL

Keeping Your
Motorcycle Yours



THEFT PREVENTION TIPS



“I FELT SICK TO MY STOMACH...”

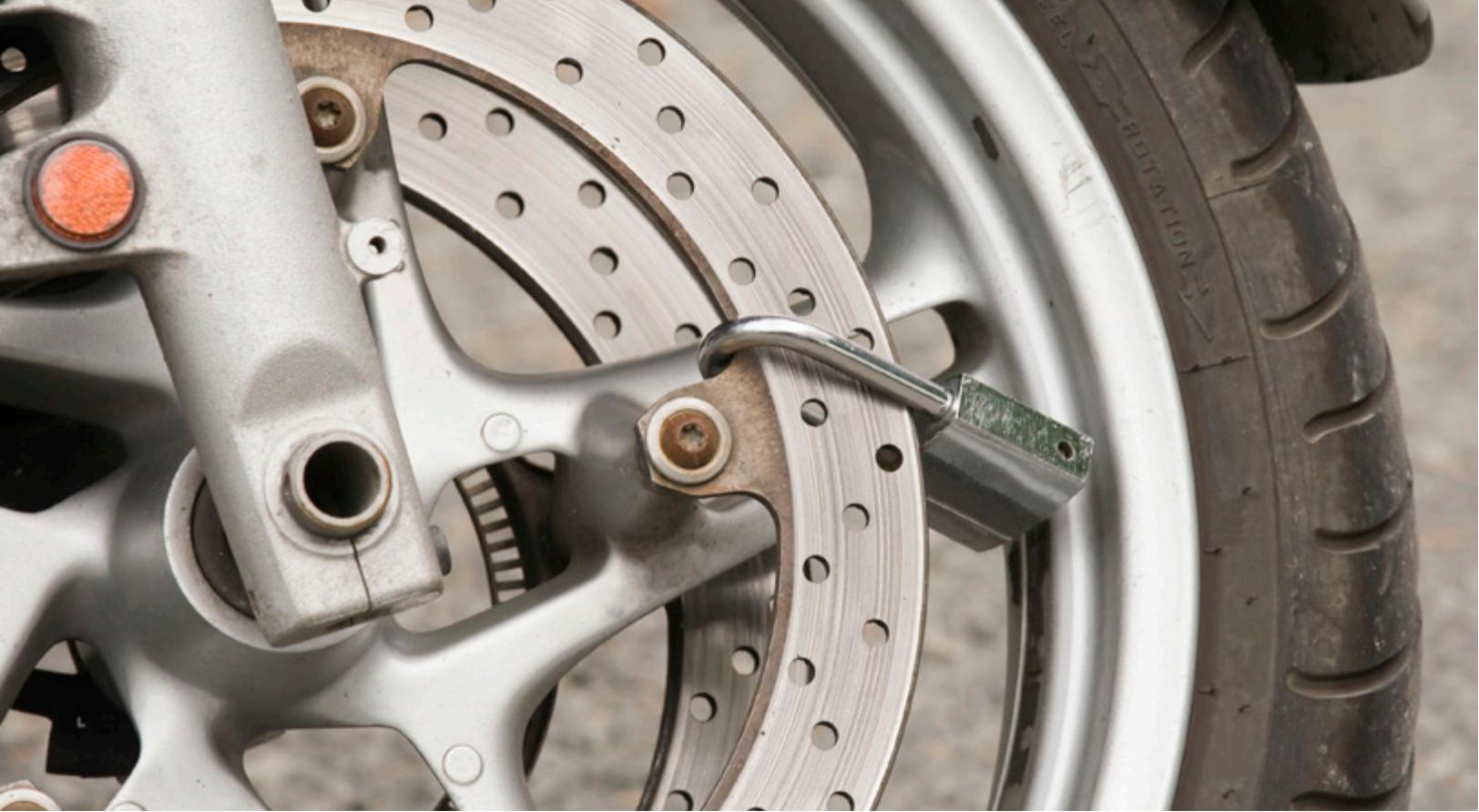
“It was just like a nightmare...”

“I stared for about two minutes at the incredibly empty spot where I had parked the bike the night before...”

No matter how you look at it, discovering that your motorcycle has been stolen is guaranteed to make your stomach turn somersaults. Unfortunately, it’s a feeling many AMA members have experienced firsthand.

Over the years, we’ve received many tips from members who have been unfortunate enough to have their motorcycles removed from their possession. While we wish this on nobody, at least their experiences may contribute to you keeping your bike yours.

We’ve distilled this advice into nine ways to keep your bike from disappearing.



LOCK IT

Keeping Your Bike 101, first day of class, Lesson One: Lock it, or you just might lose it. A determined, professional thief may get your motorcycle no matter what you do, but plenty of motorcycles are stolen by opportunistic miscreants.

Your fork lock is just a start. Adding a disc lock is better. But why stop there? Use a strong, motorcycle U-lock and a chain to attach your bike to a solid object, or another motorcycle. Looping the chain through the frame is better than draping it through the wheel, which can be removed.

Make the chain as tight as possible to offer less access for bolt-cutters, and don't let it drape on the ground, where it can be chiseled. Put the locks in hard-to-reach spots—if it's more work for you to put the lock on, it's more work for a thief to get it off. Maybe he'll move on to an easier target.

On some bikes, you can lock down the centerstand, so the motorcycle cannot be dropped off the stand and rolled or ridden away.

A lever lock on the clutch adds another layer of hassle for the thief, especially if you leave the bike in gear. Unbolt the shift lever and take it with you.

And remember that the same chain you use to secure your bike can also secure your gear. Run the chain through your helmet and jacket sleeve so you won't have to carry them around all day.



COVER IT

No, a motorcycle cover won't provide any reasonable physical barrier to a determined thief. But it might mean your bike attracts less of the wrong kind of attention. So after you've locked it, cover it.

A plain cover is best. After all, the purpose is not to advertise your loyalty to a particularly valuable brand of motorcycle, but to avoid letting thieves know what you've got.

A cover with metal grommets can be locked in place to help keep prying eyes away, and to prevent the cover itself from being stolen.

CONSIDER AN ALARM

An alarm in conjunction with a lock can be a difficult combination for a thief, especially if the alarm is hidden. Cutting chains and removing locks is likely to set off the alarm, which could stop a theft attempt before it succeeds.

But what if your bike is parked where you can't hear the alarm? What if you live where nobody pays attention to screaming vehicles anymore because they're always blaring false alarms?

Simple. Get an alarm that texts you when someone tampers with your bike.

Some riders find that an alarm attached to a cover can be really effective. Lift the cover, and the noise starts.

REINFORCE YOUR GARAGE

Use your lock and/or alarm in your garage, just the same as elsewhere. But don't stop there. Beef up your garage security as well.

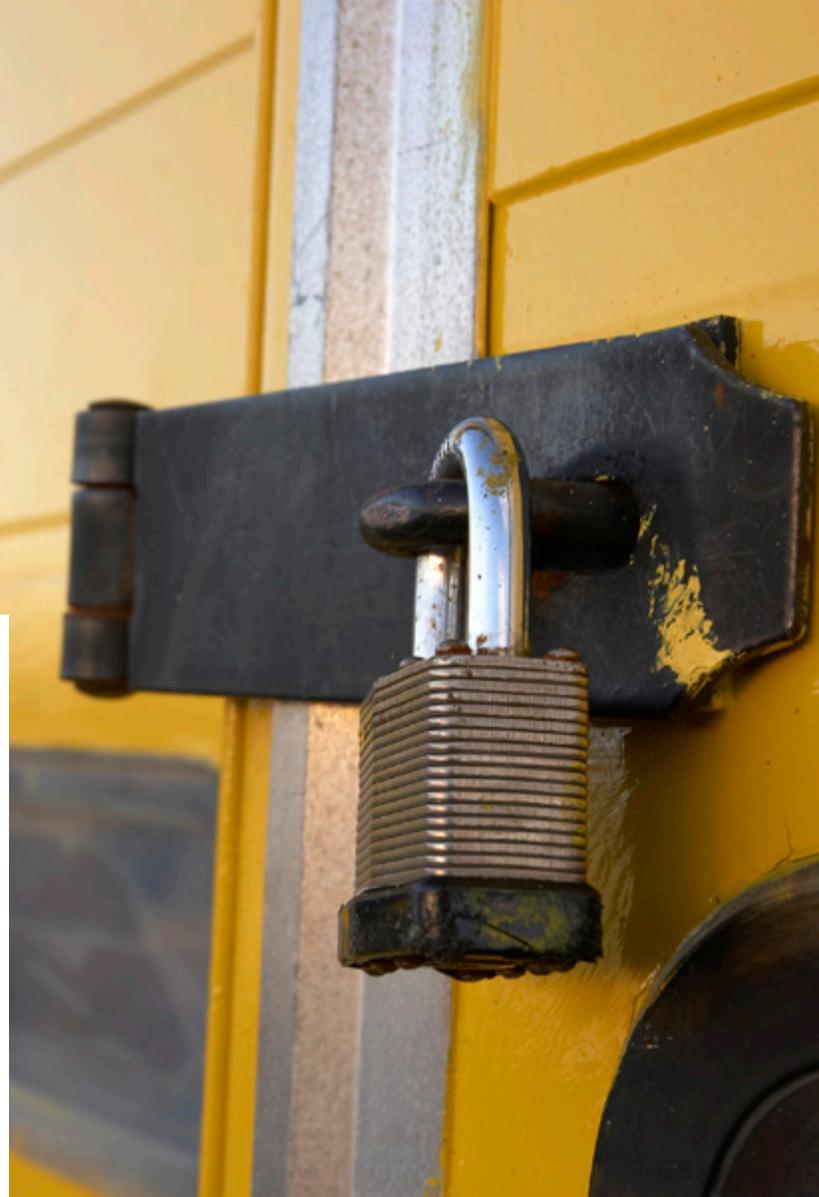
Don't confuse a garage-door opener with a lock. A simple lock on the frame inside the door will keep it from opening unless the thief seriously mangles it. And by then, he might have created enough noise to wake you up.

Installing a U-bolt in the garage floor gives you an easy way to lock your bike.

Want more protection? Consider a baby monitor. Put the monitor in your garage and the receiver in your bedroom, and you're less likely to sleep through a theft attempt.

Only slightly more expensive than a baby monitor these days is closed-circuit video monitoring. It's relatively simple to set up a system that you can even monitor on your phone.

Lastly, use other vehicles as additional obstacles. Make the thief hoist your motorcycle over the car if he wants it so badly.



DON'T BE A SHOW-OFF

Some people are so proud of their bikes they park them in the front yard for everyone to admire. That just makes it easier for thieves to case your ride.

Always park your bike inside a garage if possible. Keep the door closed and consider covering the windows.

If you must park outside, use a cover.

It's simple: The more your bike is out of sight, the more it's out of a thief's mind.



DISABLE YOUR BIKE

Locking your bike to something stops a thief from lifting it into a truck and hauling it away, but you can also temporarily disable the motorcycle to keep someone from riding it away.

This can be as simple as removing the main fuse and dropping it into your pocket after you park. Some owners install hidden cut-out switches that disable the ignition. Just tap a secret switch onto the existing kill switch circuit. Got fuel injection? A switch that cuts power to the fuel pump will keep the engine from firing.

The key is to hide these anti-theft measures so the thief runs out of patience and abandons the bike before finding them.

CHOOSE PARKING SPOTS CAREFULLY

In a parking lot, don't park next to a panel truck, van or other vehicle that can conceal thieves at work.

For the same reason, try to choose a spot where thieves cannot intentionally use their stolen-bike transporter to block the view of your motorcycle.

On the road, ask the motel operator if you can park by the front door, within sight of an all-night desk clerk. When you can, pick a ground-floor room with a parking spot right outside the door.

We've heard of motel guests making a homemade alarm of sorts by **perching a glass ash tray out of sight on top of the rear wheel.** It'll clatter to the asphalt if someone tampers with the motorcycle.



BE WARY OF TEST RIDES

Some thieves pose as buyers of used bikes. One member wrote in about a time he was selling his off-road motorcycle a few years ago. A potential buyer showed up after dark, on foot, claiming a friend had dropped him off at the corner.

The “buyer” took off on a test ride. When he didn’t come back, the member chased him down. In this case, against pretty big odds, the member got the bike back, but he admits he only caught the guy because the “buyer” got lost on unfamiliar streets.

“Buyer beware” has always been good advice, but sellers should be careful, too. Instead of a test ride, some sellers get payment first and offer a money-back guarantee if the buyer brings the motorcycle back in the same condition within an hour. It’s a no-risk test ride for both sides.

If you let someone test-ride your bike, at least ask for identification. Take down the person’s driver’s license number and the license plate number of the vehicle in which the person arrived, and gather any other information possible.



MARK YOUR TERRITORY

If all else fails, and your bike is stolen, at least don't make the thief's job easier.

Professionals nab bikes so they can break them down into parts, obliterate the VIN numbers and resell them here or overseas. If the thieves get caught, you stand a better chance of getting your bike or parts back if you've marked them so police can identify them. Consider marking your driver's license number or other identification in hidden locations on key parts, such as the engine and frame.

In addition, make sure you can quickly put your hands on all the pertinent information about your bike, especially the VIN and license plate numbers. The more time that passes before police have this information, the less chance you have of recovering your motorcycle. Don't leave documents, such as the registration, on the motorcycle, but have it handy. It also helps if you have a photograph of the bike so police know what they're looking for.



LASTLY...

And finally, make sure you have theft coverage on your bike and accessories. Don't assume your homeowners or renters insurance will cover a vehicle stolen where you live—it likely won't.

Insurance won't keep your bike from getting stolen, but at least it makes the aftermath a little less traumatic.

Following all of these ideas is no guarantee your motorcycle won't be stolen, but it will greatly improve your odds. However, if you really want to keep your bike yours, you might try the approach used by another member.

He attends Bike Week every year in Daytona

Beach, never locks his bike, and doesn't worry about theft.

Why? He rides a tank-shift Harley-Davidson with a Watsonian Cambridge sidecar. The rig weighs more than 1,100 pounds and is wider than many cars. He figures it's too big to roll onto a trailer. And he has another advantage.

"The majority of riders today wouldn't even know how to get the thing to move, since it's a hand shift," he says. "It might be fool's luck, but it has worked for 30 years."

It never hurts to have luck on your side. But a good anti-theft strategy is even better.