



Staffordshire  
**POLICE**



## **KEYLESS CAR THEFT (Relay Theft)**

**What is it?** Offenders are using 'relay boxes' to gain access to keyless entry vehicles. Relay boxes work by picking up signals from a car's key fob and transmitting them to a second box held near the car. The relayed signal fools the car's systems into thinking that the actual key is present and allows the thieves to open and start the car.

There has been a recent rise in cars being stolen without keys in the Staffordshire area. Carmakers themselves are working on countermeasures to combat the issue of keyless theft, with new frequency technologies, software and keys among the developments taking place. However, below is a list of simple steps that can be taken to combat this issue.

**Simple steps to take** – Take standard security measures, ensuring your car is properly locked and keeping keys far away from doors and windows. This will minimise the chances an offender may have to find and amplify the key's signal and is general good practice, as it'll prevent thieves from easily breaking in and swiping them. Owners can also keep their car keys in a metal tin in an attempt to block signals.

Owners can also investigate whether it's possible to switch their key's signal off, as some offer this function – though it's not always obvious, requiring a double button press or a combination of pushes on the key. Check your manual or speak to your dealer to find out if your key has this function.

**Physical barriers** - Purchase an aftermarket security device such as a steering wheel lock, a driveway parking post, or even a wheel clamp. Even if the thieves are able to access and start your car, these should prevent them from driving away – and many criminals will consider bypassing these for being too much hassle. Do not keep the key for the steering wheel lock / wheel clamp / driveway parking post with your car keys.

**Signal-blocking pouches** - Consider purchasing a Faraday pouch to keep your car key in. These pouches contain signal-blocking materials that stop your key transmitting its code, preventing crooks from being able to detect and amplify the signal. Be sure to test pouch after purchase to ensure the product works. Some faraday pouches purchased over the internet may have been manufactured to a different frequency – please remember to do your research

**Is there anything more you can do?** Other steps you can take to keep your car safe include checking if there are any software updates for the car itself, remaining vigilant for unusual activity in your area and having an aftermarket immobiliser or tracker fitted. Remember to call 101 to report anything suspicious or 999 if you see a crime in progress.



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