

Motorists in Suffolk are being urged to keep their vehicles secure following a series of van thefts.

The warning has been issued after 28 Mercedes Sprinter vans that use keyless entry were stolen between October 2018 and April 2019 with the majority of offences taking place in Ipswich where 23 vans have been stolen.

Vans have generally been stolen overnight from residential areas and car parks.

Keyless theft of a vehicle occurs when criminals use a transmitter to amplify the signal being emitted from the genuine key inside the owners house to reach the vehicle outside. This allows it to be unlocked and driven away in seconds.

Commander for Southern area Supt Kerry Cutler said: "We've seen a rise in the theft of vans in the Ipswich area in recent months, with Mercedes Sprinter vans being the primary target.

"I would urge anyone who owns a Sprinter van to be vigilant and take sensible measures to protect your vehicle.

"As a consequence of these thefts we are conducting a letter drop to all registered keepers of such Sprinter vans in Ipswich in the coming weeks to raise awareness of the issue amongst owners.

"Of course, the message is relevant to all vehicle owners – make sure you use as many preventative measures as possible to keep your vehicle secure."

Officers are urging owners of such vehicles to be vigilant and take sensible precautions. In summary owners can take the following steps to reduce the risk of this theft:

- In the house, store keys away from accessible doors and windows, inside a Faraday bag (search RFID security at www.securedbydesign.com for details of police preferred specification products) and then potentially into a metal tin. Several anti-theft pouches are available which are designed to block signals emitted by the key.
- It may be possible to disable the keyless entry function. Check your owner manual or seek advice from your local dealer if required.
- Use physical security measures such as steering wheel locks or wheel clamps to compliment your vehicles own security (www.soldsecure.com)
- Owners could also contact their local vehicle service dealer to see if there are security upgrades that can be carried out.
- Ensure that basic security measures, such as checking the doors and windows are secure, are always done.
- Where possible, park vehicles within secure compounds covered by CCTV.
- If you cannot park the vehicle in a garage, park it on a well-lit drive or well-lit area as close to your property as possible.

For more details on the above guidance you can go to the Constabulary's A - Z of crime prevention - First Principle site and go to [Keyless car and van theft](#)

Anyone who may have information about such vehicle thefts should contact Suffolk Constabulary on **101** or report it online via the constabulary website:

www.suffolk.police.uk/contact-us/existing-report-update