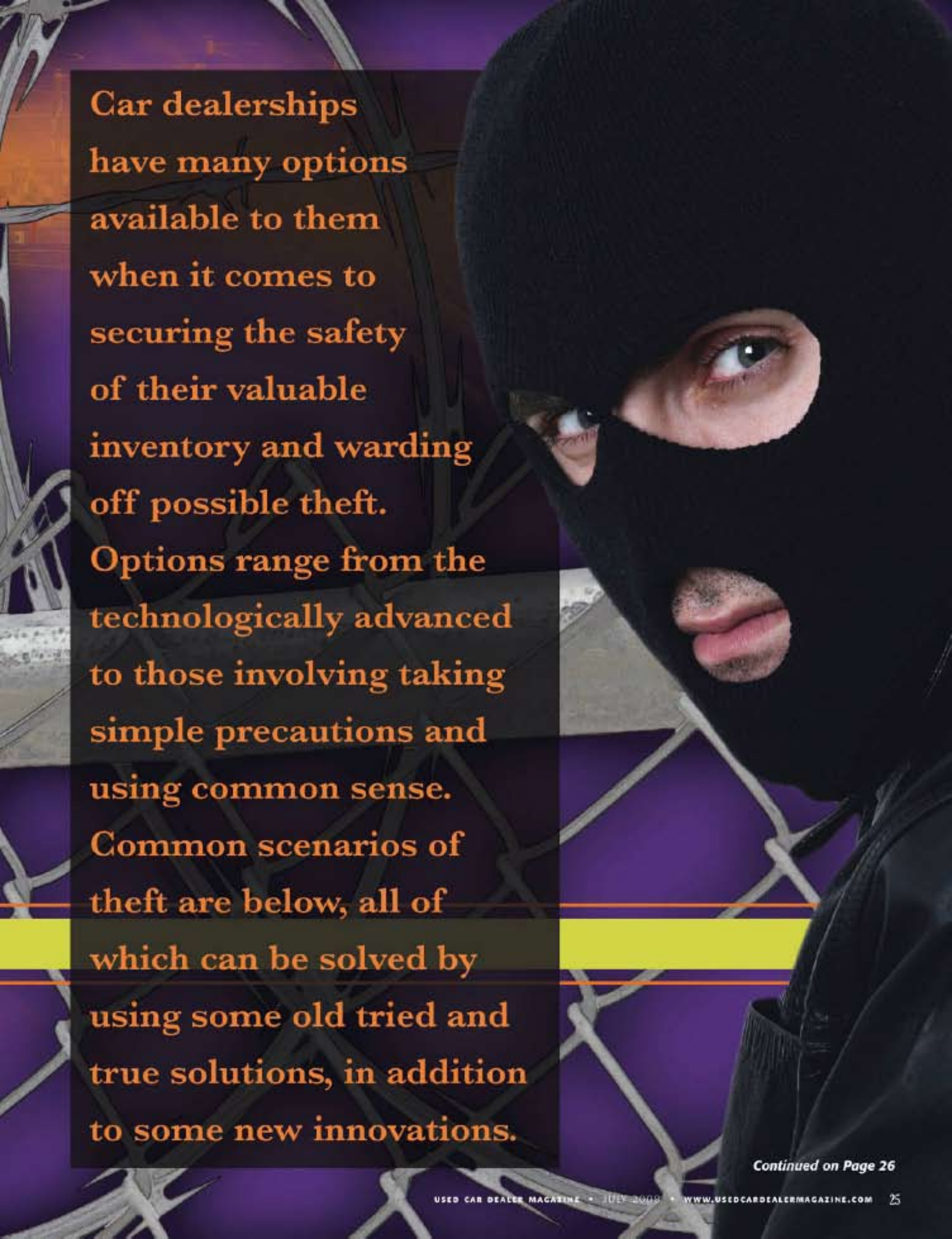


A white car is shown from the side, with its rear window shattered and the glass missing. The car is positioned behind a chain-link fence. The background is a dark, purple-to-orange gradient. The text is overlaid on the image in a bold, yellow, 3D-style font.

Protect Your Dealership from Theft:

Trends to Watch Out for and Suggestions for Securing Your Lot

By Scott Ferguson



Car dealerships have many options available to them when it comes to securing the safety of their valuable inventory and warding off possible theft.

Options range from the technologically advanced to those involving taking simple precautions and using common sense.

Common scenarios of theft are below, all of which can be solved by using some old tried and true solutions, in addition to some new innovations.

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After closing and securing the main gate, the dealership owners leave their lot with peace of mind, believing that the inventory is safe. The owners have been using the same security methods for years and trust that their security measures will continue to work. When they return the next morning, the gates are wide open and show signs of damage. The thick steel pipe protecting the gate has been cut and a vehicle from the inventory has been stolen.

The aforementioned situation is one of many techniques thieves are utilizing to steal cars from dealership lots, even when security measures are in place. While some thieves use this method of sneaking in once the lot empties of salespeople and prospective buyers, other thieves have developed bolder, riskier methods for stealing a car, right under the nose of the dealership.

Here's another example: With a

partner at his side, a thief will ask to test drive a vehicle. The partner assumes the role of distracting the salesperson, while the test driver covertly slips the spare key from the ring. After explaining to the salesperson that the car does not meet their needs, the pair drive away. At this point, they go to the nearest hardware store and make themselves a copy of the key. In broad daylight, as soon as a few hours later, the thieves return to the same dealership and simply drive off the lot with the car. On a busy sales day, this can go unnoticed.

Another situation where this type of theft occurs is at dealerships that don't require a salesperson to accompany a prospective buyer when test driving a vehicle. While the salesperson is under the assumption that the potential buyer is checking out the car, looking at features, testing speed and gauging safety, the driver is in reality meeting up with his partner to

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have a duplicate key made.

The list with all of the creative ways car thieves operate could go on and on, but when it comes right down to it, all that matters is keeping inventory safe. The following information addresses some of the scenarios to look out for, and provides suggestions to help dealers better protect their lots from auto thieves.

Make a copy

This may seem like common practice, but many dealerships have relaxed on a very basic, yet essential, rule of thumb. Before allowing a prospective buyer to test drive a vehicle, ask him for a valid driver's license. Be sure and check that the person on the license is the same person preparing to drive off the lot with the vehicle. It wouldn't hurt to even ask for two forms of identification and make copies of both.

Manage the keys

Do not keep a spare key on the same key ring that is handed over to the prospective buyer. Make sure to safeguard spare keys in a lock box and limit the number of people who have access to them. Keeping a log of all the people who check out keys can help track the vehicle within the company internally, and helps identify responsibility in the case of misplaced or stolen keys.

No solo test drives

It is important to include a salesperson on a test drive with every prospective buyer. It only takes 15 minutes for a thief to create the right conditions to commit a crime. All the person needs to do is have time enough to drive the targeted vehicle off the lot, meet a partner to duplicate the key, and return to the lot with just enough time to tell the salesperson he is not interested in the car. While this may not allow as many clients to be helped initially, it could end up paying big dividends in other ways.

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Safeguard lot access

Make it more difficult for the thief by installing an extra lock or alarm system on the gate. Having security guards monitor the lot overnight also is a precaution worth taking. Be sure to regularly check the lot's security cameras to ensure they are monitoring the correct areas of the dealership. Dealership owners have a variety of options available to them in the way of modern security cameras. First, a basic security camera can be programmed to only monitor and record the high-risk areas of the dealership. Other cameras can be set up to sweep the lot regularly as well as zone in on areas triggered by motion detectors. More advanced security systems allow users to view live or recorded video via the Internet. Some convenience features include notifying users via e-mail if a motion alarm is triggered.

Install Global Positioning Systems (GPS) for inventory

This may be a more expensive method to protecting inventory, but

“ There is the basic GPS system which attaches anywhere on the car and can trace the car's location via satellite technology. Other GPS products allow owners to map their car via the Internet. ”

it is a highly effective tool that can be used to locate vehicles that have been

taken off the lot without permission. There are several different options available. There is the basic GPS system which attaches anywhere on the car and can trace the car's location via satellite technology. Other GPS products allow owners to map their car via the Internet. For instance, dealers can monitor their vehicle online, and in the event of a theft, notify police of the car's location. Some GPS systems also have service providers that track the vehicles for the user. Other GPS systems offer convenience features such as geo fences and Quickfence™ notification. This feature means a dealer would be notified immediately via a text message or an e-mail if any of the cars were moved from the dealership without permission.

Keep in mind, theft does not always mean the car is stolen. In some cases, dealership employees will borrow a car for a weekend getaway and return the car to the dealership

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unnoticed, thinking that no one will ever be the wiser. GPS systems with Quickfence™ notification capabilities provide the dealership owner with a solution to this situation, offering protection by notifying the dealer immediately via a text or e-mail if the car strays too far from the dealership. This system provides the dealer with documented proof that the vehicle was taken off the property without permission, allowing him to take action to address the situation.

Make life difficult

The best advice available, which is supported by organizations such as the International Association of Auto Theft Investigators (IAATI), is for dealerships to take every precaution necessary and within reach to secure their livelihoods and businesses. If the dealer makes the thief's job more difficult, the thief will be less inclined to try anything. Implementing new programs and security measures increases the risk of being caught for committing an unlawful act and results in a higher likelihood that he or she will have to face the consequences.

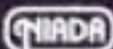
Be trendy and share information

Keep current on industry trends and new security options, and inform salespeople of scenarios to watch out for. Reading local and national newspapers for trends, as well as subscribing to trade publications, can provide dealers with the most up-to-date information and solutions. When new information is learned or new processes are put into place, make sure to pass along this important information to employees so that they can also act as an added layer of security.

Take time to evaluate

Lastly, those that have been a victim of theft should take the time to assess the current situation and look at possible causes for security breaches. Reevaluate the security

measures that are currently in place and troubleshoot the issues. While this may take some time to perform initially, the information gleaned from this process can be a useful tool in the future, help to address any security weaknesses and reduce company losses.

There is never going to be a full-proof guarantee for dealerships to protect themselves from theft, but by implementing these suggestions and practicing them every day at all times, dealers can reduce the risk of inventory theft and increase their car lot security. 

Scott Ferguson

CEO of Inilex, a leading provider of intelligent GPS systems and maker of the Kepler Systems, which allow consumers to remotely monitor, control and track their important mobile assets.

