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<https://www.doj.nh.gov/consumer/complaints/index.htm>

THEFTS OF KIA AND HYUNDAI VEHICLES CONTINUE TO RISE— WHAT CAN CONSUMERS DO TO FIGHT BACK?

Since late 2021, thefts of Kia and Hyundai vehicles have risen astronomically nationwide, as well as in New Hampshire. For calendar year 2023, six of the ten most commonly stolen vehicles nationwide are either a Kia or a Hyundai. This drastic increase in stolen vehicles is largely attributed to popular social media content which demonstrates how to quickly steal these vehicles due to the lack of engine immobilizers on many Hyundai and Kia models.

If your Kia or Hyundai vehicle was stolen (or you were the victim of an attempted theft of such a Kia or Hyundai), you should contact the Consumer Protection and Antitrust Bureau at (603) 271-3641 or DOJ-CPB@doj.nh.gov. You may also file a Consumer Complaint by following the instructions here: <https://www.doj.nh.gov/consumer/complaints/index.htm>.

An engine immobilizer is a device that only allows a vehicle to start by using a so-called “*smart key*” (a key or fob with a unique computer chip that authorizes the engine to start). It is significantly harder for criminals to steal a vehicle with an engine immobilizer since they typically are not in possession of the smart key. Vehicles without an engine immobilizer can be more easily entered and started without the use of the vehicle’s keys.

If your Kia or Hyundai does not have an engine immobilizer, there is a significantly increased risk of a thief stealing your car. Luckily, Kia and Hyundai owners can take several steps to fight back and protect their vehicle.

WHAT KIA AND HYUNDAI HAVE DONE TO DATE

In response to the historic increase in thefts, Kia and Hyundai have created computer software upgrades for most *but not all* of the impacted vehicles (vehicles without engine immobilizers) in an attempt to make these vehicles more difficult to steal. For those impacted vehicles not capable of receiving the software upgrade, Kia and Hyundai designed a metal sleeve (the “*zinc sleeve*”) that can be installed around the ignition switch within the steering column underneath the steering column cover.

NEW HAMPSHIRE CONSUMERS SHOULD GET THE COMPUTER UPGRADE OR ZINC SLEEVE IMMEDIATELY

Although the Consumer Protection and Antitrust Bureau of the New Attorney General's Office (the "Bureau") cannot guarantee that the software upgrade or zinc sleeve will prevent your car from being stolen, Kia and Hyundai claim that the software upgrades and zinc sleeves are helpful in reducing the likelihood of theft.

If you own a Kia or Hyundai vehicle without an engine immobilizer, you should contact your local dealership in order to determine whether you qualify for either upgrade. KIA vehicles have engine immobilizers if they have either a push button starter or were manufactured after December 2022. Hyundai vehicles have engine immobilizers if they have either a push button starter or were manufactured after November 2021.

Consumers who contact their local dealership will be asked to provide their Vehicle Identification Number ("VIN") in order allow the dealership to determine whether your vehicle is an impacted vehicle, and which upgrade is appropriate to improve your vehicle's security. Your VIN is displayed on your motor vehicle registration. Kia and Hyundai are installing the software upgrades and zinc sleeves at no cost to consumers. If a dealership attempts to charge for either the software upgrade or the zinc sleeve, please contact the Bureau at (603) 271-3641.

DO NOT WAIT FOR KIA OR HYUNDAI TO CONTACT YOU

If your Kia or Hyundai vehicle is within the impacted class of vehicles, you should have already been contacted by either a letter or email notifying you about the theft vulnerability and your options. If you have not received notice from the manufacturer, your car might still be eligible for the software upgrade or the zinc sleeve. If you own or lease a Kia or Hyundai and have not been contacted by the manufacturer about available security upgrades, you should immediately contact your nearest dealership to determine whether you are eligible for either the software upgrade or the zinc sleeve.

JOIN THE CONSUMER CLASS ACTION LAWSUIT NOW

A consumer class action lawsuit is pending in Federal Court in California captioned *In re: Kia Hyundai Vehicle Theft Marketing, Sales Practices, and Products Liability Litigation*, No. 8:22-ML-3052 JVS(KESx) (C.D. Cal.). The parties have reached a tentative settlement to this lawsuit which is conditioned upon final court approval. Even though the settlement is not yet approved, you can register now as a claimant and may be entitled to relief.

The **deadline** to register as a claimant for both Kia and Hyundai owners and lessees in the consumer class action is **January 11, 2025**. If you do not register as a claimant by the deadline, then you will not be eligible to participate in the class settlement.

All Kia or Hyundai car owners and lessees whose car are within the impacted class should register now as claimants. If you own or lease more than one car in the impacted class, then you must register each car separately.

For Kia owners and lessees: You can learn more about the consumer class action lawsuit and register your claim (if you choose to do so and your car is in the impacted class) at <https://www.kiatheftsettlement.com/>

For Hyundai owners and lessees: You can learn more about the consumer class action lawsuit and register your claim (if you choose to do so and your car is in the impacted class) at <https://www.hyundaiheftsettlement.com/>

PRACTICAL TIPS TO DECREASE THE LIKHOOD OF VEHICLE THEFT

The following are additional you can take to protect your vehicle from being stolen:

- 1) When at home, **park in your garage**, if possible – thieves are less likely to steal what they cannot see.
- 2) **Always lock your car**, even when driving – do not give thieves an “*open*” invitation.
- 3) When leaving your car parked, **completely close all windows**.
- 4) **Never leave your keys in your car**, including when pumping gas – thieves have stolen cars being fueled.
- 5) **Do not keep a “hidden” spare, emergency key in the car** – thieves know where to look and do so.
- 6) **Be vigilant.** If you see anyone suspiciously “*hanging around*” – particularly when parking in parking garages, parking lots, service stations, and convenience stores – consider driving around the block or parking somewhere else. It may be hard to pass on an available spot, but you will be happy you did when your vehicle is still there when you return.
- 7) **Park only in well-lit areas.** If parking during the daytime, take a second to see if there appears to be sufficient lighting if you won’t be returning until after dark– most thieves do not want to be seen.
- 8) If your car does not have an anti-theft system, consider installing one. Some insurers offer discounts for such systems; and many thieves hesitate stealing a car that might be recovered quickly.

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR CAR IS STOLEN:

If your car is stolen, **immediately call the police or 911** – if you get a telephone message; and report the following: 1) license plate, VIN, make, model, and color of your stolen car; 2) location from which your car was stolen; and 3) the date and time your car was stolen, if known. You should then contact your 1) insurance company, if you have insurance; and 2) your finance company / lessor, if you owe money on or lease your car.