National Motor Vehicle
Theft Reduction Council
driving down vehicle theft

Theft TORQUE

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Special Edition

Lotus Adopts Microdot Identification to Join the Ranks of the World's Most Secure Cars

The National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council's (NMVTRC) call for all new vehicles sold in Australia to carry secure identification has taken another major step forward with Lotus Cars Australia announcement that it now applies the DataDot$_{DNA}$ proprietary version of VIN based microdot identification across its range.

Lotus' Elise and Exige models both feature the sophisticated identification technology with microdots fitted to new vehicles from September 2005.

Why Vehicles Need Secure Identification

Professional car thieves are motivated by profit and are only deterred by the risk of detection and prosecution. While state of the art electronic engine immobilisers such as those fitted to the Lotus range have made the theft of unattended vehicles extremely difficult, professional thieves are continually seeking new ways to ply their trade.

Accessing a car's ignition key and immobiliser transponder is now the most common method of stealing a late model vehicle.

Once stolen, traditional vehicle identification such as metal compliance plates has made it all too easy for thieves to give a vehicle a new identity and pass it through Australia's registration systems undetected prior to re-sale. Microdot technology has set a new world leading standard in vehicle identification, making it virtually impossible to change a vehicle's unique Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) and providing authorities with conclusive evidence of its true identity.

The strategy is simple. Take away the professional thief's ability to convert the vehicle to cash without fear of detection and subsequent prosecution and you take away his motivation to steal the vehicle.

Microdot System Features

The VIN based microdot system comprises thousands of tiny microdots, each imprinted with the vehicle's unique 17 digit VIN.

The dots are virtually invisible to the naked eye and are sprayed onto major components throughout the vehicle using a clear water-based adhesive that contains an ultra-violet trace. When illuminated with a simple black light the adhesive produces a visible glow that indicates the dots' locations. Using an inexpensive magnifier, authorities can read any one of the thousands of dots on the vehicle to quickly establish its true identity.

The pervasive coverage and size of the microdots makes it impossible for a thief to be confident he has removed them all. And because Lotus is applying dots to all vehicles in its range, any attempt to remove dots from a Lotus will immediately flag the vehicle as suspicious.

Enhancing Police and Registration Authority Processes

In recent years police services and transport agencies across Australia have invested heavily in improving real-time exchange of information on stolen and high risk vehicles. Registration systems now record the status of written-off damaged vehicles, which have traditionally provided the source of new identities for stolen cars, and all vehicles that fall into pre-determined risk categories are automatically subject to a stringent identification inspection prior to registration. All state and territory inspection officers have been trained and equipped to search for microdots on the vehicle ranges that carry them.

Similarly, specialist police investigators have been trained and equipped to use microdots to identify suspect vehicles and separated parts. Microdots have already provided police with evidentiary assistance in a number of major investigations into organised vehicle theft.

Police and transport agencies around Australia unanimously support the VIN based microdot concept.

Microdots are an Effective Theft Deterrent

Microdots have been fitted to some other brands of luxury and performance vehicles in Australia since 2001. The NMVTRC has been undertaking a detailed evaluation of the theft history of three makes of microdotted vehicles.

As at September 2005, the data indicates that the rate of marked vehicles being stolen and not recovered is 60 and 67 per cent less than the same brands' unmarked vehicles were in similar time frames.

A third brand that has been fitted with microdots since December 2002 has experienced a 92 per cent decline in the rate of stolen not recovered vehicles to September 2005.

Insurance Implications for Cars with Microdots

The Australian insurance industry is exposed to almost $500 million in costs each year as a result of professional vehicle theft. This is reflected in insurance premiums.

While a driver's insurance history will have a major influence on his or her individual premium, all insurance companies do apply a rating factor based on the overall claims history of a particular model. Some insurance companies have already lowered this rating factor for models fitted with microdots in anticipation of lower claims. As the reduction in theft claims for new models fitted with microdots becomes evident insurers will adjust their rating calculations accordingly.

The Insurance Australia Group applies the maximum 100 points for secure identification in its internationally recognised vehicle security ratings system for vehicles fitted with VIN based microdots.

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