

Seen At 11: Without Proper Protection, Your Tires Could Be Gone In 60 Seconds

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Experts warn that car tires and rims can be swiped in seconds. (Credit: CBS2)

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NEW YORK (CBSNewYork) — As New Yorkers got ready to go to bed on Thursday night, there was a new warning about the danger lurking outside.

Brazen criminals may be up to no good in your driveway.

They strike in the middle of the night and take just seconds to commit their crime.

"My tires and rimes were gone," one car owner said.

"No wheels, no tires," another added.

As CBS2's Maurice Dubois reported, drivers from St. Albans, Queens to Massapequa, Long Island have been waking up to wheel-less cars.

"My daughter looked and she said, 'mom the tires are missing,'" one woman said.

All four tires were swiped by thieves at the speed of Nascar.

"Imagine a pit crew. These guys snatch the wheels and tires off in a minute," AAA spokesman Robert Sinclair explained.

With a new generation of silent power tools, they're able to slip in and out of neighborhoods quietly.

"It's a relatively easy thing to do for people who are skilled at doing it," Sinclair explained.

Sinclair said wheel theft is the new crime of choice now that anti-theft devices have made stealing cars themselves so difficult.

"We're seeing a lot of reports, from all across the country, about tire thefts," Sinclair said.

If you are a victim it can be really expensive.

Just one stolen wheel can run up to \$500 or more, explained Al Eisenberg, who owns a Long Island Tire repair shop. That's not all a tire thief will cost you.

"He also doesn't care about what damage he does to your car when he jacks it up," Eisenberg explained.

The thieves, looking to unload the tires, rims, and wheels quickly sell them for half the price on the internet, at pawn shops, and elsewhere.

"I see it all the time," Eisenberg said.

Experts suggested parking under bright lights, turning wheels so they're on an angle, and considering buying wheel locks, or some sort of alarm system.

"Rim Tech is actually technology that is built into the tire," Terry Gaskin explained.

Gaskin invented the first alarm and tracking system for wheels.

"It's controlled by an app that's on the user's cell phone. If someone comes within a six inch radius of that tire the person will get alerted," Gaskin said.

If the vehicle is lifted or tampered with the system will notify police who can track the wheels in real time, and put a dent in this growing crime.

"It's a hundred percent profit for a thief to do this and just pain and frustration for a car owner," Gaskin said.

Experts said most drivers don't opt for comprehensive auto insurance that would help cover the cost of replacing their stolen wheels.

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