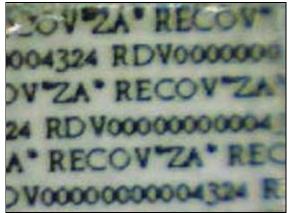
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## Compulsory microdotting on the cards for all new vehicles

By: Irma Venter Published: 03 Aug 10



Microdotting is set to become compulsory on all new vehicles, as from January next year.

Business Against Crime South Africa CEO Dr **Graham Wright** says the South African Police Service (SAPS) has announced that microdots will have to be present on all vehicles registered for the first time in South Africa on or after January 1, 2011; all vehicles to which the SAPS allocates a new vehicle identification number (VIN) on or after January 1, 2011; and all vehicles imported into South Africa on or after January 1, 2011.

The Minister of Transport is still to publish regulations in terms of the National Road Traffic Act to make this a requirement.

The microdots used to mark vehicles will have to comply with SANS 534-1, which is South Africa's new microdotting standard.

BACSA project manager and chairperson of the standard writing Committee **Fouché Burgers** says that the standard is currently been revised in anticipation of the publication of the regulation amendments.

Compulsory microdotting may succeed in making life much more difficult for car thieves.

Traditionally, a vehicle is identified through its VIN and/or chassis number. However, given the illicit market for stolen vehicles and parts, this number is often easily filed off and changed. This allows stolen or hijacked vehicles to be relicensed under a new identity, or for the parts to be sold, or for the vehicle to be exported

Currently, roughly 50% of stolen and hijacked vehicles are relicensed in the country, ending up back on the country's roads, 30% are sold for parts, and 20% are exported to neighbouring countries.

However, microdot technology sees 10 000 to 15 000 1 mm  $\times$  1 mm dots being applied, using an ultraviolet adhesive, to a single vehicle on around 90 different spots.

These microdots – think of them as DNA – carry a microscopic 17-digit laser-etched VIN or personal identification number to identify the vehicle and, by implication, its owner. This number is visible only under an ultraviolet light and by using a magnifying lens.

The beauty of this technology is that car thieves are never able to remove all of the dots.

In South Africa, about 90 000 vehicles to the value of more than R9-billion are stolen each year.

Also, more than 12 000 recovered but unidentified vehicles, worth more than R1-billion, are destroyed annually by the SAPS.

These vehicles could have been returned to the legal owners if they had been microdotted.

A study done by BACSA on a number of fully microdotted models found that the recovery rate for the microdotted models was 91%, against a rate of only 52% of non-microdotted models within the same class.