

Distributor achieves stunning drop in theft rate

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One New Zealand vehicle distributor has managed to get theft of its models down to virtually zero at a time when car theft has jumped 15.5% to become the nation's second biggest crime.

Subaru puts the stunning reduction in theft down to microdots no bigger than a grain of sand.

"Our New Zealand new vehicles were targeted by thieves, but its no longer the case," says Chris Rickards, Managing Director of Subaru New Zealand.

They are sprayed on all new Subaru's sold in New Zealand. Since the company started using the microdots here in 2003, the reported theft of a New Zealand new Subaru has become a rarity.

The use of the dots is about to spread to all newly registered vehicles in the country. Cabinet decided on the WOVN policy in late 2004, and is expected in the next few weeks to affirm its implementation.

An independently verified cost benefit analysis indicates the policy could halve organised car crime theft which sees 6504 cars totally disappear each year. The un-recovered vehicles each year are valued at \$80 million and Police and the Ministry of Justice believe they are quickly dismantled or rebirthed for sale.

Subaru says the use of the dots has seen theft virtually wiped out, and in Australia theft of the vehicles carrying DataDots has been cut 92% since their use started in 2003.

Vehicle theft is a lucrative business for criminals and driving up insurance premiums. Subaru NZ is spraying all its new vehicles with more than 7,000.5mm diameter dots, suspended in an adhesive that's almost impossible to remove. Each dot contains the vehicle's unique identification number, making life very problematic for professional auto ringers.

The downstream impact of whole-of-vehicle marking (WOVM) is equally significant. As DataDot's NZ's Managing Director, David Lumsden puts it, "the country will enjoy a massive payback in terms of lower theft rates, which will flow on to lower insurance premiums".

Subaru was one of the first vehicle importers to incorporate DataDotDNA technology.

DataDotDNA benefits both Subaru NZ and its customers. As company Managing Director, Chris Rickards, puts it: "It's economic to install – especially when done

robotically - and because it complements other security capability like immobilizers and alarms, Subaru owners feel extra-secure".

Such is the promise of DataDot technology that the European Union, South Africa, Russia and Taiwan and other jurisdictions are also now studying the compulsory introduction of whole-of-vehicle-marking. Based on overseas experience, the Ministry of Justice and Police believe it can both significantly reduce car theft and have wider applications, including in counter terrorism.

Another big plus of DataDot technology is its speedy payback period. The Ministry of Transport has already scoped compliance and certification costs. The independently verified cost benefit analysis indicates that, at just \$47 per vehicle to apply and by halving unrecovered vehicle theft rates alone, benefits exceed costs in just six years.

A Cabinet announcement on the introduction of compulsory whole of vehicle marking is imminent. With a global standard already being developed and the readiness of a number of potential suppliers, Police and industry hope for a speedy introduction of WOVN.

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