



The Hidden Signal: How Thieves Are Using Bluetooth to Find and Steal Laptops from Vehicles

A concerning new trend in theft is on the rise, and it's turning your vehicle into a high-risk zone for your valuable electronics. 24/7 Security Services is alerting everybody of a massive spike in laptop thefts from parked vehicles, driven by a surprisingly simple yet effective method: thieves are using Bluetooth scanners to pinpoint your devices digitally.

That laptop you thought was safely hidden under a seat or in the vehicle's boot - if it's not fully powered off, it could be sending out a signal that acts like a beacon, leading criminals directly to your vehicle. In the past, a thief's strategy was limited to peering through windows, hoping to spot a forgotten bag or a charging cord that had been left unattended. This new method is far more sophisticated and leaves little to chance.

The Constant Signal

Most modern laptops, when put to 'Sleep' or 'Hibernate,' don't fully power down. To provide a seamless, quick-start experience, they keep specific components active, including Bluetooth and Wi-Fi radios. These features continuously emit small, detectable signals.

Using readily available smartphone apps - some designed for finding lost headphones or other gadgets - thieves can scan any given area, such as a parking lot at a mall, gym, or office park. These apps display a list of all active Bluetooth devices in the vicinity. A device named 'Patrick's MacBook Pro' or 'HP-Laptop-45B' is an obvious giveaway. As the thief walks closer to a vehicle, the signal strength shown on their app increases, allowing them to identify the exact vehicle containing the device.

Once your vehicle has been identified as the source of the signal, it becomes a prime target for investigation. The thief knows with certainty that a valuable electronic item is inside, making the risk of breaking a window worthwhile. They can be in and out in seconds, long before anyone notices.

How to Protect Your Devices and Your Vehicle

The Best Defence: Full Shutdown

The most effective way to make your laptop invisible to scanners is to shut it down completely. Do not just close the lid or put it in Sleep mode. Go to your menu and select 'Shut Down.' A fully powered-off device emits no signals and will be undetectable. This is the most critical step you can take if you must leave your device in a vehicle.

The Alternative: Disable Bluetooth

If you cannot perform a complete shutdown for any reason, the next best option is to manually turn off your laptop's Bluetooth feature before packing it away. While you're at it, disable the Wi-Fi as well for an extra layer of security. This stops the device from broadcasting its presence.

The Golden Rule: Don't Leave It Behind

The only guaranteed way to prevent your electronics from being stolen from your vehicle is not to leave them in your vehicle. Whenever possible, take your laptop, tablet, and other valuable electronics with you. A few moments of inconvenience are far better than a broken window and a loss of hundreds or even thousands of rands in property - not to mention the invaluable data that was on it.



The Hidden Signal warning doesn't just apply to laptops. Tablets, smartphones, and even some wireless headphones can emit a discoverable Bluetooth signal.

#SafetyFirst

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