

Motorcycle And Scooter Security

Introduction

Twenty three years ago I started my mobile business in North East England in Motorcycle Security after my Honda CBR 600 was stolen. Looking around there were not many security products around and there was certainly no advice on how to secure your pride and joy. So the journey began to try and change people's ideas on the subject and also to provide a source of motorcycle security products. In the days of Sold Secure I was part of a small group who were responsible for setting down the standard of fitting for Alarm Immobilisers, this in turn was later accepted by Thatcham as their fitting criteria for motorcycles and scooters and still is today.

So now you know a little bit about me and my trade experience, let's talk security.

Motorbikes and Scooters are a target for thieves! Don't make it easy for them!

Just because no one has ever stolen your pride and joy before, doesn't mean that it won't happen today. All kinds of machines get stolen from all sorts of places. Machines are very commonly not secured properly so they can be easy for thieves. Machines of all kinds can be stolen by joy riders, to order, or be broken down as parts, and can often be "exported" out of the country before you know they're gone. An unsecured machine is an easy target for thieves as it can be wheeled away or spirited into a van. The more security measures you make, the less attractive your machine will be to others. Doing this you will reduce your risk of becoming another statistic and victim of crime. Don't listen to the "pub experts" on the subject as most have not a clue on the subject and their mantra is "Alarms and security are not worth having" - until their machine disappears along with all the modifications made such as expensive exhausts and others!

By taking some appropriate security precautions, using good quality products, and using them correctly, should help you to keep your machine safe. Use the best security you can afford. **Don't secure a £10,000 bike with a £50 lock!** Police advice is to suggest spending 10-15% of the value of the machine on its security. A simple statement that becomes inappropriate in terms of today's prices, but gives you a base line of what might be appropriate if you know the value of your bike. If you have more than one bike, look at the total value when assessing your security. Check with your insurance company to see what security standards they require for your insurance cover to be valid.

The most important principle for security is that make sure you lock your machine to something solid whenever possible. Simply putting a chain and padlock around the machine and not locking it to anything solid allows the thief to easily lift the machine and disappear with it in one go! Sports Bikes and smaller capacity machines are frequently stolen for example by 2 or 3 blokes that simply lift the bike into the back of a van. When out riding, try to chain it to a solid object. If you are riding with friends, locking bikes together allows one bike to be a ground anchor for another.

Most machines are stolen from the owner's home address. Using a quality ground anchor can give a solid point for a chain around the machine or machines. As motorcycles are so frequently stolen, a properly fitted ground anchor on solid concrete is the preferred measure over anything in a shed or anything outdoors.

THE ONION PRINCIPLE (TOP)

At the core of anyone looking for machine security should be this principle. You should think of how to approach what you security you need like the layers of an onion. If you use one product, it only needs the thief to get past this to steal your pride and joy. The more layers you add the less likely your machine will look as a likely target to thieves. A list of layers is shown below. **Remember you do not need to use all of them, but have a plan for what you use at home and what you use when riding out.**

- INSURANCE APPROVED ALARMS/IMMOBILISERS
- INSURANCE APPROVED IMMOBILISERS

- DIY SYSTEMS - ALARMS / IMMOBILISERS
- LOCATION DEVICES/TRACKERS
- MARKING/IDENTIFICATION SYSTEMS
- DISC LOCKS
- CABLE LOCKS
- SHACKLE LOCKS
- CHAINS & PADLOCKS
- GROUND ANCHORS
- COVERS
- GARAGE & SHED SECURITY

Now let's see what we can use and when. When speaking to customer's advice is always tailored to the type of machine involved, commuting or pleasure riding and where a machine is kept. Total cost is also considered. The idea is to use **THE ONION PRINCIPLE** to best effect for that customer. Sports and Commuter riders would be different from that for large tourers etc. but there will be basic items which are the same for all.

First of all Electronic Security:

INSURANCE APPROVED ALARMS/IMMOBILISERS

Probably the biggest discussion item on internet forums, mainly due to them giving off false alarms or immobilising the rider whilst out with friends. Everyone blames the alarm when something goes wrong. If fitted properly and that's a big **IF** the majority of Category 1 insurance approved units will give years of trouble free protection. Movement and nudge settings can usually be altered by the customer to stop false alarms. Pressure washing can also cause issues in older units, but new units tend to be sealed and potted to prevent this but does not give the excuse to ignore. Siren tones can sometimes be altered to provide a different sound and extra sirens fitted so you have two sources of noise. Several alarm manufactures now provide upgrade Category 2 to Category 1 Thatcham upgrades for machines which have Thatcham Category 2 immobilisers already factory fitted. Costs vary around the country but look to spend several hundred pounds at least for a fully fitted system.

(Thatcham Category 1 is a full Alarm and two point immobiliser system, Category 2 is an immobiliser system usually manufacturer factory fitted. The 2 to 1 upgrades add alarm functions to the machine and are tested by Thatcham so when fitted give the machine full Category 1 insurance security status.)

INSURANCE APPROVED IMMOBILISERS

Category 2, two point machine immobilisers. Now a dying product as most large capacity machines have factory fitted immobilisers as standard. Smaller capacity machines are now the main market for these devices although these are also appearing with a form of immobilisation.

DIY SYSTEMS - ALARMS / IMMOBILISERS

In this area quality counts! The more the cost, usually the more the features of their big brother insurance approved alarms, but without the immobilisation (some new models now can feature single point immobilisation). Fitting is much simpler, usually 2 or 3 wires. Follow the instructions and they will provide security noise. Cheaper alarms usually mean problems ahead.

When considering alarms – Do you need it for your insurance, get a big discount?? Or could a quality DIY system give you the same requirements but allow you to save the extra money and use it for other security products (Onion principle again).

LOCATION DEVICES/TRACKERS

The newest kid on the block and available in either pro fit insurance approved systems which are monitored by 24/7 centres (Ongoing subscription required after fitting) or DIY fit which can be monitored by yourself via the internet.

Quality varies at great deal in this sector of the market. The insurance approved products usually work in several different ways including GPS, RFID, and SIM card technology and are at the cutting edge of sector. DIY versions usually but not always work on one or the other and are not monitored 24/7.

Again the internet forums are a buzz about “bread crumb trails” for police to use. If the police want to use the information they have procedures to go through and it would probably mean you have been involved in a serious or fatal RTC, caught speeding at high speed or generally being a dingdong and you deserve it!!!! Normal law abiding riders have nothing to fear.

Now moving on to mechanical security:

MARKING/IDENTIFICATION SYSTEMS

A must for all machines new or old!

These allow the police to id stolen parts but also put off most thieves in the first place as they cannot sell them on without damaging panels or parts. Also they cannot be sure that they have removed every scrap of id and if caught by the police in possession they will get done – so will you if caught in possession of a stolen second hand part on your bike!!!!

There are two main players in this sector and both use the same type of marking in some form in their kits. UV liquid etching leaves a serial number which can be seen under UV light, DNA in a UV solution, tiny microdots which are etched with security information to tie them to a registered machine, RFID tags to place in seats, wiring and wheels etc. which hold information to tie to registered machines. The police have access to the databases holding the information so can check on seized property or roadside checks.

DISC LOCKS

As with most security products quality varies with price. However, please remember this using a disc lock on its own whatever its cost will give no security at all as there are many ways to get around this product and I will not expand on the subject as there maybe people reading this article who would use the information for less than legal reasons. Some come with built in alarms which give noise but my advice is use two disc locks at each end if possible so at the very least they may have to lift your machine to move it. Quality products usually have been tested and certified.

CABLE LOCKS

My advice is simple here. For motorcycle and scooter security, is not use these items as they can be easily bypassed on a level similar to Disc Locks. Due to the vast differences of quality they are better suited for pedal cycles etc. If you must use them, then use two or three at the same time.

SHACKLE LOCKS

Shackle or D Locks are best suited to be used with a sort length of chain to gain maximum use as they are difficult to fit between a machine and an anchor. Most can easily be carried on machines under the seat area so measure first before you buy. Used correctly and not left on the ground they can provide a lighter weight deterrent as opposed to a full chain and padlock combination while you are mobile. Quality products usually have been tested and certified.

CHAINS & PADLOCKS

This item should be the heart of any security for your machine, no ifs no buts!

There are people who put the chain around the wheel and frame of their machine. Depending on the weight of the machine, this provides almost no deterrent at all and is similar to using just disc locks alone as the bike can still be lifted. Using a chain and padlock or a D-lock and chain, looping it around or through a solid object makes a very big difference to your machine's security either at home with a ground anchor or mobile with friend's machine or solid object. The best way to secure at the machine end of the chain is through the frame of the bike if possible. Just looping through the wheels is not very good as wheels can easily be removed from the machine and thieves can easily source another wheel. Leaving a chain touching the floor leaves it vulnerable to numerous types of attack. Looping the chain from a higher point on the machine and onto a higher anchor point makes it easier to keep the chain off the floor and much more difficult for the thieves to deal with. As stated before a quality D Lock could help here. Failing this, use two or more chains to tie down your machine as best as possible.

What size of chain do I need to use?? – If a lot of manufacturers are to be believed then biggest is the best. A few years ago 10mm-13mm was the diameter of choice then it was 16mm, 19mm and bigger. Along with bigger size also came bigger prices. While bigger diameter chains may stop most opportunist thieves they then go to the next vulnerable part of your security, normally the anchor point and attack that instead, so the massive chain that could anchor the Queen Mary goes along with your pride and joy!

Going to the Onion Principle, although the heart of your security at home use a 16mm chain max along with your other layers of security to build an overall package. When mobile a 13mm chain is the largest to have with you as anything larger will probably not fit on your bike and if it does will have you leaning over just to correct the weight along with other measures.

To gauge what length of chain you need, put your machine where it will stay at home and loop some string from the anchor point through the machine and back to the anchor point keeping it off the ground. This will give you the total length of chain needed (e.g. a 2m chain will be 1m each way) and add a couple of links for the lock.

As with all security products, some are certified such as Sold Secure or Thatcham tested and approved and also come with a price tag matching their weight.

For safety, never ride with your security chain and lock around your body or with disc locks in your pocket. These can cause serious injury if you're involved in an accident.

GROUND ANCHORS

Ground anchors are the solid object for your machine to be attached to mainly at your home address but sometimes also at your workplace. There are numerous variations on the mark and more appearing every day. If possible a one which lies flat on the ground when not in use will prevent a trip hazard as well as making it easier to position your machine. They mainly fall into two categories: Bolt Down or Concrete In.

Concrete in is the best to have if you are able to but Bolt down if installed correctly also gives a secure point to anchor your machine to. Better quality products will have also been tested and certified by standards such Sold Secure and Thatcham.

COVERS

A must, along with marking a machine. A cover will hide your machine from the outside world as well as preventing scratches etc. Some have openings a chain can be threaded through so making it harder to see what's underneath and also what other security measures you have taken. As such it puts off some opportunists in the first place. Interior and exterior versions are available.

Finally it's not just about your machine but also where it's kept.

GARAGE & SHED SECURITY

Another vast subject as there are usually other items kept in them as well.

If you have a garage, use it. Thefts occur from the owner's home because they get complacent and leave their machine outside. Don't leave your machine out for all to see, after washing it for example. Always put it away in the garage as soon as you arrive if possible. Make sure your garage is properly secure. If it's easy to break into you could actually be helping the thieves by giving them cover in which to work. There are numerous locking mechanical mechanisms available to lock or block the door movement and battery or electric alarms which activate by infrared movement detection. If possible add it to your house alarm system and now home CCTV is available in many forms and kits. Inside the garage or shed keep other tools out of site so any visitors are not provided with a readymade army of things to use to deprive you of your pride and joy.

RIDING OUT WITH FRIENDS OR AT WORK

When out for a ride or going to work even the strongest locks and most sophisticated alarms will do little if any good if you park your bike out of sight and give a professional time to disable them. So it makes sense to always park your bike where it can be seen, day or night, by passers-by. Try to vary the places you park so that thieves don't learn your habits and use **THE ONION PRINCIPLE**.

Locking your bike and following the other security steps using the Onion Principle may seem like a hassle, but it's nothing compared to the stress and cost of having your bike stolen. So spend a few pounds, take a few minutes, and you can be confident that your bike will be there when you get back.

- Do not advertise your motorcycle to the world by leaving it on the drive. If you do not have a garage, cover it
- When you park your bike in a public place, cover it and park it in a well-lit area
- Always put the steering lock on, chains attached to anchors and activate any alarms Use other measures to increase security such as Disc Locks
- Use a cover when at home or work
- Mark the main areas of the motorcycle with a recognised marking system
- If you have a garage, use it!
- Make sure your garage is fitted with strong locks

THE ONION PRINCIPLE - (TOP)

Follow the TOP Advice to deter Motorcycle and Scooter Theft.

It Could Be The Difference Between 2 Wheels & NO Wheels!

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