

One vehicle crime every

100 seconds

A Radius white paper on vehicle crime and fleet protection in 2026

312,817 vehicle crimes in England and Wales, April 2025 to March 2026. Home Office data released under FOI 2026/13257.

The crime clock

Spread evenly across the year, vehicle crime never stops. In a single hour in England and Wales, 36 vehicles are broken into, stolen or tampered with.

One hour of vehicle crime



17 **Vehicles broken into**
one every 3.5 min

13 **Vehicles stolen or driven away**
one every 4.6 min

5 **Vehicles tampered with**
one every 11.9 min

Plus one vehicle taken and driven dangerously every 2 hours 14 minutes

857
vehicle crimes every day

100 seconds
between one vehicle crime and the next

> “Preventing theft, spotting it early and knowing how to respond all help to minimise downtime and the financial impact of vehicle crime. Telematics alerts customers when a vehicle is used outside its usual hours or area, so they can check what’s happening and act quickly. If it has been stolen, tracking helps us follow its location and support recovery.”



John Mussett
Director of Investigations, Radius

For businesses, the cost of vehicle crime goes beyond replacement

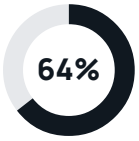
Lost vehicles and equipment can also mean interrupted work and lost income.

£420

a day

Estimated earnings loss without a van, among tradespeople whose work would be affected.[1]





of tradespeople said losing their van would significantly affect their ability to work.[1]



of tradespeople said losing access to their van for even a day or less would negatively affect their business.[1]

Tool theft findings

£1,710
average value of tools stolen per theft[2]

92%
lost at least a day's work[2]

26%
lost a full week[2]

Vehicle protection



of business premises surveyed in the Home Office's most recent Commercial Victimisation Survey use vehicle tracking. It ranks ninth among the 10 most common crime-prevention measures used by business premises in England and Wales.[3]

1. Direct Line research, Censuswide survey of 500 UK tradespeople.
2. Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles, survey of tradespeople.
3. Home Office, Commercial Victimisation Survey 2023, Figure 10: The top 10 most common crime prevention measures used by premises, all theft types. Source: Crime against businesses: findings from the 2023 Commercial Victimisation Survey, GOV.UK.

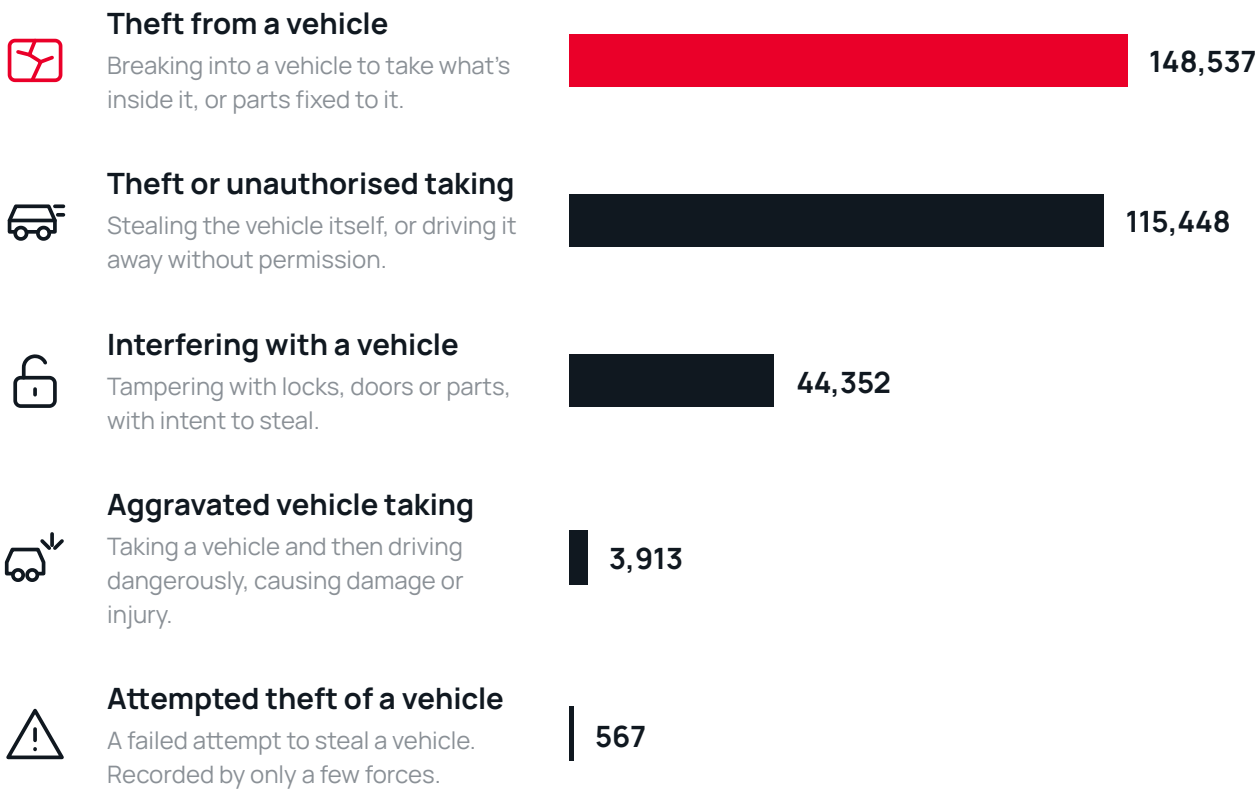
Five ways vehicles are targeted

Vehicle thefts have increased by 75% in the last decade. Almost half of all vehicle crime is theft from a vehicle. For a fleet, the van often stays put while the tools, stock and parts inside it disappear.

47.5%
is theft from a vehicle

36.9%
is theft of the vehicle itself

Offences recorded, April 2025 to March 2026



About the data

Figures are police-recorded offences in England and Wales from April 2025 to March 2026, covering 44 forces including British Transport Police. They come from Home Office data released under Freedom of Information request 2026/13257 (Annex B). Items stolen come from the 20 forces that record them; recording varies, so they show proportions rather than national totals. The headline rate is 31,536,000 seconds in the year divided by 312,817 offences, which is 100.8 seconds, rounded to 100. The data has not been quality assured with forces. Attempted thefts are recorded by only a few forces. Radius recovery figures are Radius' own. The 75% rise in vehicle thefts over the last decade and the tool theft downtime figures on page 8 are from Signals from the Road. The 68% of stolen vehicles never recovered is from the Office for National Statistics.

No safe season

Vehicle crime is fairly consistent throughout the year. Even the quietest month saw 23,818 offences, 85% of the busiest.

27,989
offences in October 2025

23,818
offences in February 2026

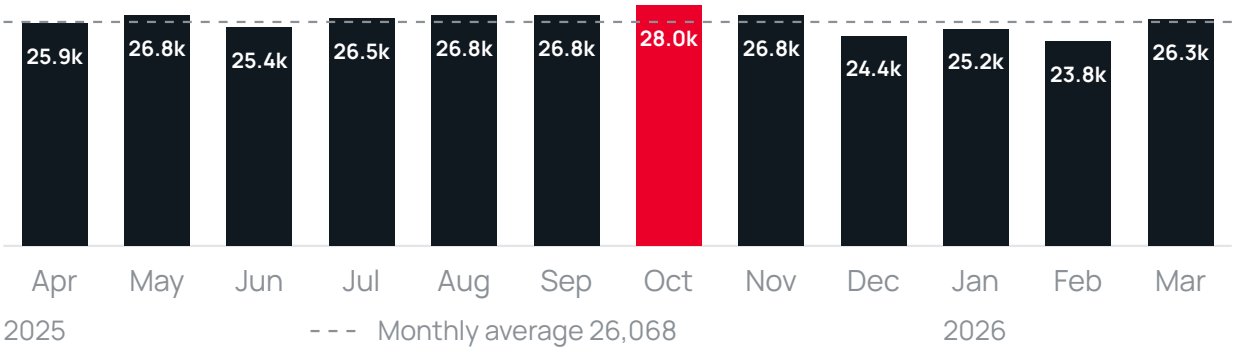
Vehicle crime by month, all five offence types

78.1k
Apr to Jun

80.1k
Jul to Sep

79.2k
Oct to Dec

75.4k
Jan to Mar



February was the quietest month, but it was also the shortest. With only 28 days, its rate of 851 offences a day was almost exactly the yearly average of 857. The lowest daily rate was in December, at 787 a day.

> People expect a spike at Christmas. What we actually see is a steady rhythm of theft, month in, month out. For anyone running a fleet, the important thing is not to let a quieter month become a reason to ease off on the basics. Make prevention a daily habit by securing vehicles and assets, setting up alerts in your telematics software and regularly check asset locations."



Ian Brownrigg
Director of Sales & Customer Management, Radius

Where vehicle crime happens

Vehicle crime is concentrated in a small number of areas. The Metropolitan Police area alone accounts for more than a quarter of all offences, and ten force areas account for almost two-thirds.



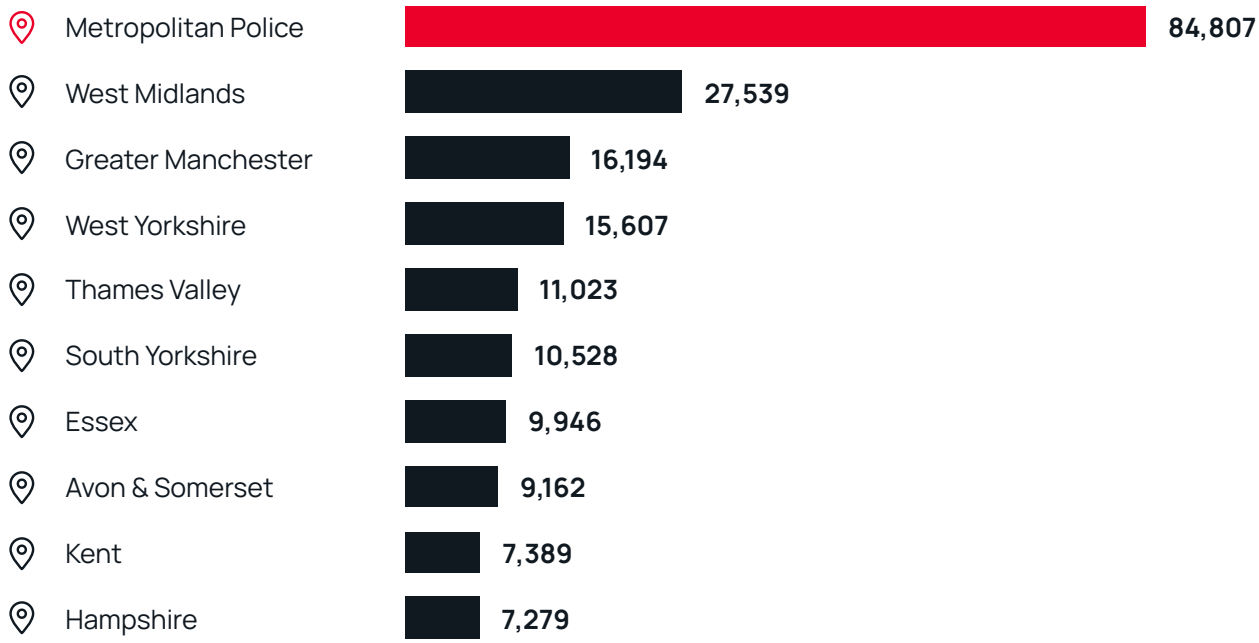
27%

of all vehicle crime is in the Metropolitan Police area

64%

happens in just 10 of the 44 police force areas

The 10 highest force areas, total vehicle crimes

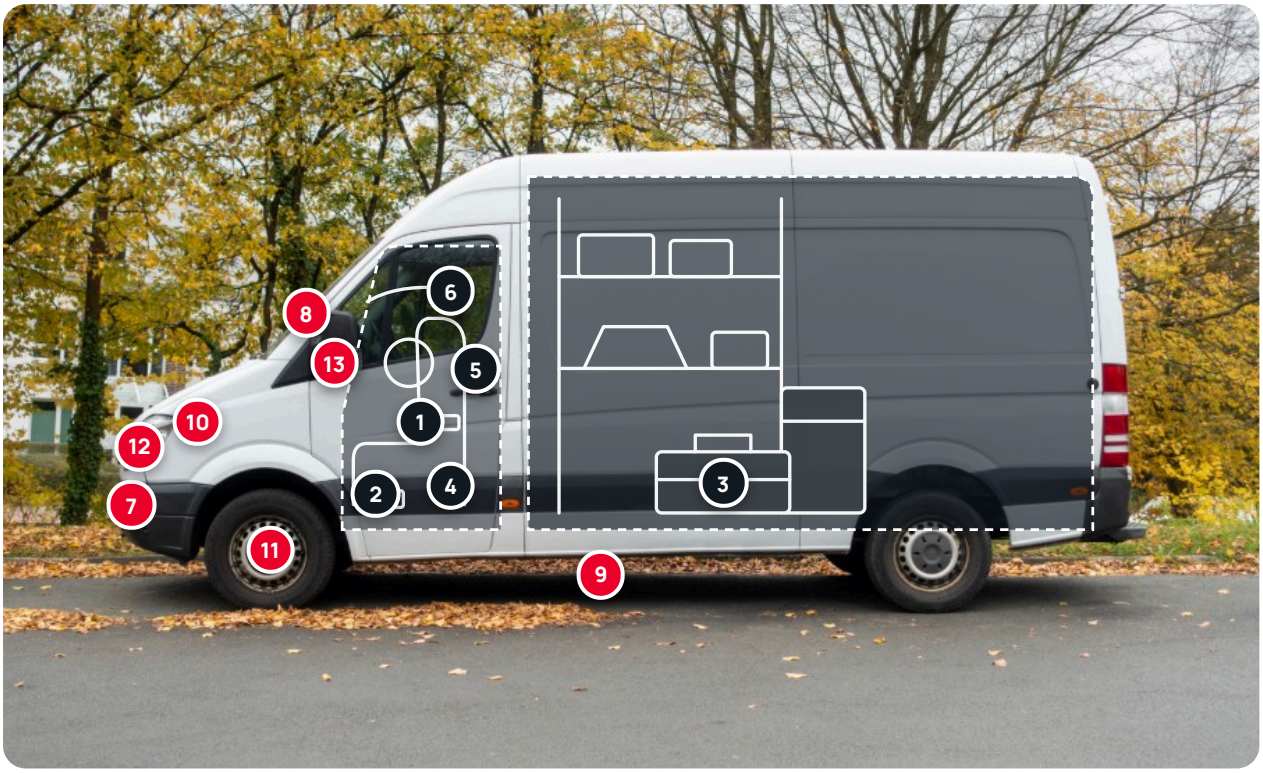


In four of the top 10 areas (West Midlands, South Yorkshire, Essex and Kent), more vehicles were stolen outright than broken into.

What do thieves take?

What thieves took from vehicles, based on 43,481 records of stolen property.

Taken from inside, see key below Taken off the vehicle itself, see key below



Inside the vehicle		61.1%
1	Cash, cards and wallets	35.6%
2	Phones and telecoms	7.8%
3	Tools and equipment	7.6%
4	Licences and documents	7.0%
5	Jewellery	2.4%
6	Sat navs and GPS units	0.7%

Off the vehicle itself		38.6%
7	Registration plates	21.0%
8	Windscreen glass	7.6%
9	Catalytic converters	3.3%
10	Batteries	2.5%
11	Tyres, wheels and trims	2.3%
12	Badges	1.4%
13	Mirrors	0.5%

Other items, including child seats, roof racks, stereos, aerials and keys, make up 0.3%. Percentages are shares of items recorded, not of all offences. Item positions are illustrative. Windscreen glass may include glass broken during a theft rather than taken, as police records only show the number of theft from vehicle offences (offence code 45) by material class.

Spotlight: tools

1 in 13 items stolen from vehicles is a tool or piece of equipment: 3,294 recorded in 20 force areas.

For trades, utilities and field-service fleets, a stolen toolkit can cost more than the damage to the van.

86%

of tool theft victims were forced to take unplanned downtime

4 days

nearly four days of downtime on average

1 in 5

were off work for over a week

> “When a van is broken into, owners aren’t only worried about the window. They’re worried about the tools, equipment and machinery. Without them, that work day is over before it starts, which is why more customers now want to see their kit as clearly as they see their vans.”



Karen Woolf
Director of Sales & Customer Management, Radius



Asset tracking that pays for itself

See where your assets are and where they have been.

- Strengthen safety and security across your fleet.
- Identify opportunities to cut operational costs.
- Instant insights and detailed reports to help you make key decisions.

Find out more about asset tracking →

Spotlight: catalytic converters and batteries

2,540

Catalytic converters and batteries cut or lifted from vehicles in 20 force areas in a year.

1,437

Catalytic converters

1,103

Batteries



These thefts target the vehicle's parts rather than its contents. They're fast, often happen overnight at depots and car parks, and leave the vehicle off the road until it's repaired.

> "It's not always the whole vehicle thieves are after. The precious metals inside a catalytic converter make it valuable in its own right, and it can be gone in minutes. Police highlight hybrids and vehicles with higher ground clearance as particular targets. Batteries can also be stolen for resale or scrap, leaving a vehicle unable to start even though it's still exactly where the driver parked it."



John Mussett
Director of Investigations, Radius

Spotlight: plate cloning

1 in 5

items stolen from vehicles is a registration plate. At 9,121, plates are the most stolen item taken off a vehicle.

Stolen plates are used to clone vehicles. The fines, fuel drive-offs and crimes committed under a cloned plate land with the registered keeper: your business.

A plate is stolen → It's fitted to a lookalike vehicle → Fines and charges land with your business

> A stolen plate is often the start of something bigger. We've seen fleets receive penalty notices for places their vans have never been. The ones with telematics are in a much stronger position, because their journey history shows where the vehicle was. That's often enough to get the charge cancelled."



Karen Woolf
Director of Sales & Customer Management, Radius



How Radius helps: prove where your vehicle really was

Kinesis, Radius' telematics software, replays every journey with key events. When a penalty notice arrives for a place your van has never been, the journey record shows exactly where it was instead.

Hidden in plain sight

With 30 years' experience across policing and investigations into vehicle and asset theft, John Mussett, Director of Investigations at Radius, shares what vehicle crime looks like in 2026.



We once found stolen construction equipment in the street with orange barriers around it. It looked like it belonged to a job that hadn't started yet, so nobody reported it. That's quite typical of what a lot of asset and vehicle crime looks like today.

Theft is planned, not opportunistic

Vehicle theft has changed a lot over the last decade. Much of what we see in vehicle crime is planned, with criminals looking for weaknesses in electronic security and ways to disrupt tracking.

Relay theft is one example, where criminals exploit the signal from a keyless vehicle's key. But more advanced methods haven't replaced the straightforward theft of keys. If keys are easy to find inside an accessible property or depot, criminals may take that easy route instead.

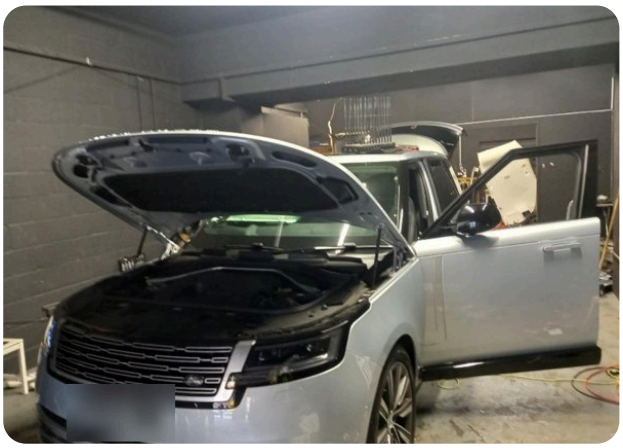
Stolen vehicles rarely go far at first

People imagine a stolen vehicle goes straight out of the country. Often, that's not what we see. It's usually left somewhere for a day or two to see whether anyone comes looking for it.

Thieves park vehicles where they fit in, a car on a residential street, a van on an industrial estate. One recent recovery was only a mile and a half from the customer's property. That doesn't sound far, but in a built-up area like London, there can be hundreds of vehicles parked within that distance. Without knowing exactly where to look, you could still miss it even with the proximity.

A car can turn up in my cul-de-sac, stay overnight and disappear the next day. Years ago, that might have prompted a few questions. Someone might have asked a neighbour or called the police. Today, we're more likely to notice it and think nothing more of it. A stolen vehicle doesn't need to be somewhere remote. It just needs to look like it belongs.





From a Radius recovery: police were struggling to locate this stolen Range Rover. The Radius recovery team found it in a warehouse, and only when police opened the doors did it become clear why it had been so hard to find: the thief had put a signal jammer on its roof.

"A stolen vehicle doesn't need to be somewhere remote. It just needs to look like it belongs."

Three routes for a stolen vehicle

- Stripped for parts
- Shipped abroad whole
- Given a false identity

The whole vehicle isn't always the target

Some vehicles are stolen to be stripped, and almost everything is used: wheels, tyres, suspension, engines and gearboxes. Others are shipped abroad whole.

Another route is to give the vehicle a false identity and sell it back into the UK market. That can mean altering or replacing the vehicle identification number (VIN), the unique code that's meant to tie a vehicle to its records. It often involves a number plate too. In the police data behind our latest vehicle crime report, registration plates were the most stolen item taken off vehicles: 9,121 recorded, or one in every five things taken. Some of those plates end up on lookalike vehicles, and often fines that follow are traced back to the registered keeper, not the cloner.

False hire is another growing problem. Criminals use false documents to hire a vehicle that's never returned. In other cases, they pay someone with genuine identification, a bank account and an address to take out the hire for them, with an agreement to steal it for a cut of the profits.

Thirty years of change

I've worked in this industry for 30 years. In the 1990s, we saw sports cars with little security stolen for joyriding. Thatcham's security testing helped push manufacturers towards better locks, deadlocks and higher standards, and theft came down. Today, we're dealing with higher theft rates, more technical methods and organised crime.

John's three rules for fleets

01
Don't assume a stolen vehicle has gone far.

02
Don't leave keys near doors.

03
Don't rely on a single security measure.

What this means for fleets

My advice is simple. Don't assume a stolen vehicle has gone far. Don't leave keys near doors. And don't rely on a single security measure. The fleets that come off best are the ones that make prevention part of everyday practice, find out quickly when something isn't right, and know exactly who to call when it happens.



A stolen tractor, recovered by Radius with the police.

How Radius helps protect fleets from vehicle crime

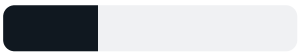
radius

Kinesis and Kinesis Pro telematics software bring your vehicles, tools and equipment into one view.

- Help prevent theft
- Aid recovery
- Know where everything is

Stolen vehicles recovered

Across England and Wales
Recovered by police and other means



32%

Radius recovery success rate



98%

68% of stolen vehicles are never recovered, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Radius figure: success rate of recovering cars and vans.

£20m+

in stolen vehicles and assets recovered for businesses by Radius

From risk to response

115,448

vehicles were stolen or driven away without permission in England and Wales between April 2025 and March 2026.

Vehicle tracking

Last known location and trip history, plus stolen vehicle recovery devices designed to avoid detection by thieves.

148,537

vehicles were broken into in England and Wales over the same 12 months, with tools, cash and parts taken.

Tool and asset tracking

Identify missing kit and its last recorded location.

36

vehicle crimes are recorded every hour in England and Wales, on average.

Out-of-hours alerts

Early warning when a vehicle moves out of hours or leaves a geofenced area.

9,121

registration plates were stolen from vehicles in a year. Usually used for changing vehicle identities.

Kinesis journey history

Prove where your vehicle really was, to challenge fines and criminal activity in the event of cloning after number plate theft.

Spot potential fuel card misuse with Geo-Plus

With Radius, you can link fuel cards with vehicle tracking to flag transactions where the linked vehicle wasn't present, helping you investigate suspicious use.

A vehicle crime checklist for fleet managers

radius

Nine practical checks to strengthen prevention, spot suspicious activity and prepare a response.

01

Check tracking is working and that vehicle and asset locations are updating as expected.

- [ ]

02

Set alerts for unexpected use, including out-of-hours movement and departures from agreed areas, where supported.

- [ ]

03

Confirm who receives alerts and who will review and respond to them outside working hours.

- [ ]

04

Regularly review vehicle and asset locations, including equipment that has been parked or unused for several days.

- [ ]

05

Review parking arrangements, prioritising secure, well-lit locations and protecting access to load areas.

- [ ]

06

Account for tools and equipment at the end of each shift and remove valuables, fuel cards, documents and devices overnight wherever practical.

- [ ]

07

Review physical security for each vehicle, including appropriate protection for wheels, registration plates and catalytic converters.

- [ ]

08

Keep keys securely stored, away from doors and windows, and control access to spare sets.

- [ ]

09

Have a clear theft-response plan, with recovery contacts, vehicle details and out-of-hours responsibilities readily available.

- [ ]

An unexpected fine could warrant a closer look. Check it against your vehicle's journey records and investigate any mismatch that could indicate registration plate cloning.



radius

Every 100 seconds, a vehicle is targeted. Know where every one of yours is, right now.

Talk to Radius about protecting your fleet

0800 056 4432

www.radius.com