

Auto thefts leave victims feeling bitter



Theft: Charges hard to prove, police say

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ing that he could be a target. Meade has surveillance cameras all around his garage and driveway in Foothill Farms.

Unfortunately, those cameras did not stop the theft of his Honda Civic show car, but they provided about 10 minutes of interesting viewing after the crime.

Four people showed up outside Meade's house and started stealing equipment out of his car, he said. Then, they decided to just steal the whole thing, Meade said.

His frustration peaked when California Highway Patrol officers demonstrated little interest in the tape. When his car was found stripped in a North Sacramento neighborhood, officials declined to dust it for fingerprints.

"The detectives don't care

Today, "the chances of getting a criminal complaint filed in a car theft can be slim at best," McGinness said.

Many cars disappear quietly out of residential driveways. Others are taken with a degree of senseless violence that makes it even tougher to shake the memory.

Morehouse was getting ready to move out of his Sacramento condominium near 12th and G streets the same day that his car was taken.

"They not only stole my car, they killed my cat," Morehouse said. "It was 10 years ago, and it's like it happened yesterday."

If the car is recovered, theft victims may be hit with towing and storage fees that many view as the worst part of the entire ordeal.

"It was 300 bucks to get my wreck towed home," Meade

By David Richie
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Many auto theft victims describe the same helpless moment.

"Getting up in the morning and seeing my pickup gone," Fair Oaks resident Bob Clouse said. "It's a sick feeling you never get used to."

David Morehouse of Citrus Heights said, "You walk out and stand where the car isn't, as if it will magically appear."

A stolen car is bad enough, but the ripple effect can be devastating. Car theft victims usually say goodbye to any valuables stored in their vehicles - tools, golf clubs and cameras are usually taken along with the car. If their vehicle is recovered, they may have to pay tow and storage charges.

Then they deal with the emotional toll. Some realize that the theft also has hijacked their sense of personal security or their faith in seemingly secure neighborhoods.