



Tech-Time

Putting a lock on your ride

Security steps you can take to protect your Pontiac

By Tom Locke

Our classic cars have increased in value over the years with auction prices for GTOs, Trans Ams, fuel-injected Bonneville and other Pontiacs gaining value. It's important to make sure your Pontiac stays in your hands.



GPS trackers. There are several security devices you can buy for your Pontiac. Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) trackers can alert the owner that the car/trailer has been moved or the current location of the car/equipment for recovering your car or equipment. This tracking is typically done through software/apps on our smart phones.

We have come a long way from security devices of the 1980s.

Should you install the trackers in the collector car vs. the trailer? Consider a tracker for both locations. If both are stolen at an event they may dump the trailer and just take the car.

Low cost trackers. Cheap available trackers that don't require a subscription but limited on their capabilities and refresh rates are the Apple Air Tag and Android Tile. These devices are typically priced around \$20 - \$25. These products may alert the thieves that they are being tracked and have a speaker design to allow them to locate the tracker. There are videos online showing how to disable the speaker. These are more designed to track car keys, bags, even your pets, but can still be used in our cars.

Care should be taken when choosing a tracker. Things to consider are:

- Refresh rates – how frequently it reports its location to the satellite
- Subscription cost and whether or not it has a contract

- Battery life – rechargeable batteries or install power source or extended battery
- Power source – Hard wired to car/equipment if battery life is minimal or long term tracking
- Geo fencing - Software that alerts you in the car has been moved from a certain predetermined location. Using this software, you can set a perimeter around your house or maybe a hotel while you are at an event. If the car is moved from that location you will receive an immediate alert. This is helpful in the speedy recovery of a stolen car.
- Movement Alerts – Similar to GEO fencing; when activated this would notify you that the car has been moved.

Alternatives

Who remembers the once popular LoJack? They are still out there; however, with the upfront cost of \$900 (that includes 3 years of tracking), police departments are installing fewer on their cars and some smaller police departments may not have any vehicles with this technology. LoJack is unique in that once a police report has been filed they would activate a signal pining from your stolen car and police cars in the area would be alerted of a stolen car in the vicinity. With multiple police cars they could triangulate the exact location of the car. Keep in mind it still uses GPS tracking like the others that we discussed. These are hardwired into the electrical system of the car and therefore battery life is not a factor.

Land Air Sea – GPS tracker Cost \$10-\$30, waterproof. Magnetic, 2-week battery life. No contract. Subscription rates: 3 min refresh \$20 mo/\$180 per year; 1 min refresh \$25 mo/\$225 per year; 3 sec refresh \$50 mo/\$404 per year.

Spytec GPS tracker - a few variations available. Cost apx. \$20. 2 week battery, Subscription is \$29 mo/\$276 per year. They have 3 refresh rates available: 60 seconds, 30 seconds, and 5 seconds.

Tracki GPS tracker – Cost \$6 -\$25, battery life is short - 2-3 days depending on refresh rate. It uses a very small box which makes it easy to hide. Subscription is \$20 month and includes a 15 min refresh rate. Finding the cost of the subscription is difficult and not readily available on their website. They list a few refresh rates but never a price associated with them.

Resources

Here is a helpful article from *Car & Driver* that goes through some of the GPS hardware.
<https://www.caranddriver.com/car-accessories/g43163976/best-gps-trackers-tested/>

Tom is a member of the Board of Directors of the Valley of the Sun Pontiacs club (www.valleysunpontiacs.com). He presented this information at the club's Dec. 10, 2024 general meeting and is the third in a series of talks on technical topics for your Pontiac. He can be reached at gtlockes1@msn.com