



AIRBAG THEFT AND FRAUD: DEFLATING A GROWING CRIME TREND

The Facts

Insurance industry statistics show that approximately 50,000 airbags are stolen each year, resulting in an annual loss of more than \$50 million to vehicle owners and their insurers.

Airbags have quickly become a primary accessory on the black market for stolen vehicle parts. A new airbag, which retails for approximately \$1,000 from a car dealer, costs between \$50 - \$200 on the black market.

Because of their portability, airbags can be easily removed and installed as “new” by unscrupulous collision repair shops. These dishonest operators will then charge the vehicle owner or their insurer the full price for the replacement, thus committing insurance fraud.

Fraud and Theft Prevention Tips

The National Insurance Crime Bureau suggests the following prevention tips to help avoid airbag fraud and theft.

- Use a reputable automobile collision repair shop that employs ASE-certified mechanics.
- Inspect the invoice to ensure the repair shop purchased the airbag from a manufacturer, dealer or recycler.
- If possible, inspect the airbag prior to installation. If new, it should be packaged in a sealed container from the manufacturer.
- The trim cover over the steering column should be the same color as the remaining trim interior. If not, it is an indication that the original airbag has been replaced.
- When you turn on your vehicle's ignition, a red SRS (Supplemental Restraint System) indicator should light up and flash in the instrument panel display, indicating the airbag system is activated. No SRS light indicates a problem with the airbag system that could result in no airbag activation.

IF YOU SUSPECT INSURANCE FRAUD OR THEFT, SPEAK UP! CALL THE NICB TOLL-FREE HOTLINE...1.800.TEL.NICB (1.800.835.6422). YOUR CALL IS FREE. YOUR CALL CAN BE ANONYMOUS. YOU COULD BE ELIGIBLE FOR A REWARD.