

According to the FBI Computer Crime Survey of over 2000 firms, more dollars were lost in 2005 due to notebook-PC theft than from any other computer crime except viruses. What can you do to avoid becoming a statistic? Lots.

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Stay in touch: You can't keep your eyes on your laptop at every moment, so rest a hand, finger, or other body part on your computer when you glance away.

Keep a low profile: Notebook carrying cases that look like notebook carrying cases might as well sport a sign saying "steal me." Carry your laptop in an unobtrusive bag or backpack.

Lock and load: Most notebooks come with a locking port that connects to cable locks made by Kensington and other companies. If your machine doesn't have a locking port but does have a VGA connector, you can batten it down with the **\$30 Defcon Video Port Key Lock** from Targus. The device securely attaches a locking cable to any VGA port.

Be a screamer: Designed for when you're on the go, **Targus's \$50 Defcon 1 Ultra Notebook Computer Security System** has a motion sensor that triggers an ear-piercing shriek whenever your laptop is moved. The device is great for airports and restaurants, but it can be embarrassing when triggered inadvertently.

Cover it up: Lock up your laptop while it's in the car with the **\$99 Ncase Portable Safe** (Car-safe.com). To avoid broken windows, throw a newspaper or T-shirt over any valuable item to hide it and keep thieves from being tempted.

Leave your mark: Write down your notebook's serial number and make an identifying scratch or mark to help identify the system if it's stolen. For \$26, **STOP** (Security Tracking of Office Property) provides a hard-to-remove ID label for your laptop and lifetime tracking and notification if it is ever lost and then found. The label acts as a theft deterrent--removing it reveals a "stolen property" tattoo burned into the case--but the service might be most valuable as an easy way for honest folks to return a lost laptop.

Release the hounds: Several services find lost notebooks by tracking down the Internet connections the devices make after they're stolen. The services install a program on the notebook that contacts a data center when the PC goes online after it's been reported lost or stolen. They also can delete some or all of the data on the hard drive if the machine has been reported stolen.

Absolute Software's Computrace **LoJack for Laptops** takes advantage of a feature in the BIOSs of many notebooks made in the last year by Dell, Gateway, and other major vendors that lets the unit be traced even if tech-savvy thieves replace the system's hard drive or reinstall the operating system. Check with the manufacturer to see if your system's BIOS supports Computrace. The service costs \$50 for a year's subscription, or \$100 for three years.

Check your coverage: If your homeowner or other insurance policies don't cover stolen notebooks, see if you can add coverage, or get a quote for laptop insurance from **Safeware**.

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