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Cable Locks and STOP Plates

Oct 14

By Ed Winstead:

Continuing on my theme of security for your Mac, today I want to talk about

physical security and deterring people from even thinking about stealing your computer. Remember back in [episode #216](#) when I did a review of Watchmac? Well that product focused on infringement notification and in [episode #223](#) I reviewed LoJack for Laptops, which is a recovery tool. Neither of these provide an ounce of prevention. So today I want to talk about preventing bad guys from attempting to steal your precious Mac. And the first thing I want to discuss is the humble but very effective cable lock.

Now I know these things are not pretty. The last I checked, David Yurman does not make a computer cable lock and if he did it would probably cost more than your Mac. But as unfashionable as they might be, they are highly effective at preventing theft. That industrial grey look just screams trouble for any would-be thief.

If you've never used a cable lock, they are similar to a bicycle cable with a loop on one end and a special combination lock on the other. You wrap the cable around any stationary object and pass the lock back through the loop and on to the computer which has a special security hole to receive these locks. It only takes a few seconds and your done.



Recently a friend of mine had his computer stolen from his hotel room while on a business trip. Mind you this was not some cheap flea bag hotel and the thief was both experienced and quite brazen. However, A simple cable lock would have prevented all but the most determined and heavily equipped thief. The truth is that you don't have to build Fort Knox around your Mac, you just have to make your machine less attractive than the next person's machine.

Thieves are opportunistic people, so don't make it easy on them. A \$30 cable lock from any electronics store will give you piece of mind when going back for that second latte. Also, if

you're less than confident in your general home security, you can lock down your desktop machine and most external hard drives as well.

Now if you are put off by the looks of a cable lock then you're really going to be repulsed by the next item, a security plate. Generally relegated to business computing, a security plate provides a permanent identifier for your computer. One such provider of plates to both business and individuals is STOP Security Plates and they can be found at www.stoptheft.com

These plates are a two part system. Part one is a steel plate that is permanently attached to your machine and the second part is a high visibility sticker warning everyone that this computer is protected against theft by the STOP registration system.

The objective is to make your laptop unattractive to the bad guys by making it traceable and effectively reducing its street value down close to zero. The way this works is that for \$25 you purchase a small kit from STOP that includes the warning sticker, steel plate, cleaner and

A unique bar code linked to the owner's tracking information.



The STOP Web site address, www.stoptheft.com and toll-free number, 1-800-488-STOP.

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January 2013

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special adhesive. You clean the surface of your machine according to the instruction, apply the adhesive and plate, then the sticker. Each plate has a unique barcode. To finish the process you go online to www.stoptheft.com and register that plate's barcode. That's it.

The plate is now permanently attached to your computer. And when I say permanent, I mean permanent. Don't even think about trying to remove it. Even if you happen to have your own Jaws of Life, removing this plate will reveal two things. First, you will most certainly scratch, dent and generally mar up the your Mac trying to pry this thing off. Second, you will find a surprise underneath. The STOP plate will have permanently tattooed the surface of your computer with the words "Stolen Property" and their 1-800 recovery number.




STOP is all about deterrence and making your machine less attractive to thieves than the next person's machine. If your computer is stolen while wearing a STOP plate then you call STOP and notify them in case someone finds and reports the machine to STOP. But remember this is primarily a deterrence tool, not a recovery tool.

Now, if you one day need to sell a device which has one of these plates attached there is a legitimate way of transferring the plate registration over to another person, so no need to worry about that. Finally, if you want to go all out, they even have a STOP plate with a cable lock receiver attached to the plate and a mating cable, which goes for \$40.

So there you have it. Two prevention tools for deterring would-be thieves from attacking your Mac. Neither of these are going to win any fashion awards but the point is deterrence and protection. I use the sleep test on such matters. If it lets me sleep better at night then it's probably a good device.

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