

MICRODOT TECHNOLOGY

TO CURB MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT

David Horner | Auto F&I

AUTO F&I
PRODUCTS & CONSULTING SERVICES

The use of microdot technology is set to be legislated early this year, as the South African government acknowledges the success of this method in combating vehicle theft worldwide.

A microdot is a text or image substantially reduced in size onto a small disc to prevent detection by unintended recipients. Microdots are normally circular and approximately one millimetre in diameter. They can, however, take the form of different shapes and sizes and be made from various materials.

This system offers a significant deterrent to serious crime in South Africa, especially with house break-ins, business robberies and vehicle theft. Property fitted with microdots is less desirable for thieves, and for those who receive the stolen property.

The South African Police Service (SAPS), Business Against Crime SA (BACSA) and the Department of Transport have prepared legislation on microdot technology for motor vehicles, which is due to be published early in 2011. The state legal advisers are currently drawing up the new Second Hand Goods Act which will include the use of this technology to mark vehicles and therefore keep track of stolen goods re-entering the market.

In 2010, the SAPS national head office instructed all vehicle identification sections in the country to utilise microdot technology, which is easy to use and incorruptible. To date, more than 11 000 South African police officials have been trained and equipped to use the method. The SAPS has now ordered 1 116 microdot identification kits for the exhibit room of every police station in the country.

BACSA, together with the leading microdot suppliers in South Africa, have been establishing a microdot standard in anticipation of next year's legislation. This standard stipulates that motor vehicles can be fitted with microdots only by approved fitment centres and that vehicles be marked in specified areas.

More than 12 000 stolen (and recovered) vehicles are destroyed annually by the SAPS because it is impossible to identify the owner. If these vehicles had been microdotted, they could be returned to their owners and insurers and then economy would be spared the R1.2 billion loss. Underwriters and brokers are rapidly embracing the benefits of microdot technology and passing on premium discounts to their clients.

