

Remote hacking, a race between manufacturer and criminal

ADAC, a German motorist association, recently discovered and fixed a security flaw that could have allowed 2.2 million BMWs, Minis and Rolls-Royces to be remotely unlocked by hackers through BMW's ConnectedDrive.



A recent insert on CBS News' '60 minutes' programme revealed the dangers implicit in this new remote hacking threat, which includes switching the windshield wipers on, causing the car to hoot, tampering with the fuel gauge and speedometer readings and, most frighteningly, controlling the car's acceleration and braking systems.

"BMW's ConnectedDrive feature allows drivers to browse the internet, access real-time traffic information and BMW's concierge services, and control basic car functions, like locking and unlocking, from their smart phones," says Warwick Scott-Roger, head of Dialdirect.

2G technology

"Although BMW now encrypts transmissions between cell phones and cars, the luxury auto manufacturer is hardly alone in its virtual vulnerability. Cars incorporating 2G technology for vehicle-to-vehicle networking, and even saved routes navigational software, provide an opportunity to hackers to learn not just where you park your car, but also where the rest of your valuables are kept as well."

Scott-Roger says it's a race between manufacturer and criminal. "As long as there are specific models and makes that are sought after on the black market, car thieves will find new ways to infiltrate the latest security measures. Despite the incredible advancements in technology, nothing beats staying aware, and being vigilant of your surroundings," he says.

Being that this is a relatively new risk, it is unlikely to be included in the average insurance policy. "Should a case like this be reported to Dialdirect, we would thoroughly investigate the merit of the claim, and, should the investigation prove that the customer has been a victim of wireless hacking, and that the customer took all the necessary precautions to safeguard their

car against theft, the customer's claim will be handled accordingly," Scott-Roger concludes.

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