

Losing your car key comes at a cost

Replacing a lost car key used to be simple - you'd take the spare to your local key cutter and for about R250 you could have a copy made. These days, however, it's a different story.



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Not only does the modern car key start your car, it can also unlock the doors remotely and provides extra security thanks to transponder technology. All of this is great news until you lose or damage your keys – and discover you're up for hefty replacement costs.

“Many car owners have no idea how much their keys are worth until they lose one,” says Dewald Ranft, national chairman of the Motor Industry Workshop Association (MIWA), an association of the Retail Motor Industry Organisation (RMI). Most people are shocked when they discover a replacement key could cost thousands of Rands and, if you don't have a spare, keep you grounded for a day or two.

Ranft says the cost of a single replacement key ranges from R2,000 to R4,500 and the price for keys for an exotic car can even be higher. A new key needs to be ordered, cut and coded which could mean up to a full day or more off the road. “A high price for losing something you have to carry with you on most days,” he says.

While the cost of a single replacement key is high, if you lose all the keys to your car, the costs and time off the road will

increase significantly, particularly if the car's computer has to be reset or completely replaced to match the new replacement keys.

“One could easily be quoted anything from R10,000 to more than R20,000 for work done on various models of cars,” he says

Independent industry experts are of the opinion that increasingly complicated technology used in car accessories, including keys, may be a sales growth area for businesses selling vehicles, but it can be a high-tech headache for car owners.

Accredited independent aftermarket workshops, like MIWA accredited workshops, offer a legitimate alternative service to cut and recode modern car keys for most car models at a very competitive cost. “An added bonus,” says Ranft, “is that they can, in most cases, assist vehicle owners immediately, which means you avoid the hassle of down time or being without a vehicle for more than a day.”

Most MIWA accredited workshops have worked with modern car keys since their introduction to the South African market. They have the equipment and parts so there is no risk to the owner. “Many people are simply unaware there's an alternative should you find yourself ‘keyless’,” he says.

Ranft says many MIWA shops carry genuine keys and also stock after-market keys which may look different to the original but work as well and cost less. Some workshops even carry diagnostic tools that can help reset the car's computer if both keys are lost.

Tips

MIWA provides some tip:

- Don't ever have just one key? If you're buying a car, be sure to ask about the keys before you sign on the dotted line.
- Smart but not strong - It's a fact - keys wear out developing faults or even breaking. Sometimes a repair is an option and not a total replacement. The two most common problems are water damage and keys that have been dropped.
- Remember you have options – Either speak to your current dealer to manage the replacement or if you prefer, and once you have checked your warranty won't be affected if you select an alternate workshop, approach any of our accredited MIWA workshops across the country to replace the missing key.

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