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CAR THIEVES TEMPTED AS SUMMER MONTHS BEGIN; H.E.A.T. PROVIDES DRIVERS WITH SAFETY TIPS

LIVONIA, Mich. (July 7, 2008) – H.E.A.T. (Help Eliminate Auto Thefts) warns Michigan residents to stay alert this summer as carelessness among car owners often increases as warm weather sets in, providing thieves with easy access to personal property and vehicles. July is National Vehicle Theft Prevention Month and the Auto Theft Prevention Authority reports that August is the highest month for auto theft in Michigan.

“As summer begins, people often let their guard down as focus shifts to warm-weather fun with friends and family over safety precautions like auto theft prevention,” said Terri Miller, director of H.E.A.T. “Thieves are still out there ready to steal exposed items such as shopping bags, electronics, purses and possibly the vehicle itself while you are off enjoying the nice weather.”

“Keep a watchful eye on your property this summer, whether at home or on vacation,” encouraged Detective William Darnell of Western Wayne Auto Theft. “It is also important to keep watch in your neighborhood in the summer months, since thieves are especially active when the weather is warm.”

H.E.A.T. is happy to provide drivers with the following tips for keeping cars and belongings safe during warm weather:

- **Closed Not Cracked** – Close windows tightly, don’t even leave them “cracked” and always lock your car when your vehicle is unattended.
- **Out of Sight** – Keep all personal belongings, including iPods, cell phones and other valuables, out of sight.
- **Kill-Switch** – Protect your vehicle from being started by a thief by having a mechanic install a concealed kill-switch.
- **Double Duty** – Add a second layer of protection to your vehicle by using a steering wheel locking device, a steering column protector or an alarm with a visible flasher.
- **VIN** – Consider etching your VIN (Vehicle Identification Number) onto the glass surfaces of your vehicle. VIN etching makes vehicles less attractive to thieves because all windows must be replaced before the car is tagged with a fake VIN for resale.
- **Keep Watch** – Help your neighborhood by noting any suspicious activity and writing down descriptions, license plate numbers and other helpful information.
- **1-800-242-H.E.A.T.** – If you know anything about auto theft, chop shops, carjacking or insurance fraud report it day or night to your local police department and H.E.A.T.’s 24/7 confidential tip-reward line, 1-800-242-HEAT or online at **1800242HEAT.com**.

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About H.E.A.T.

Since its inception in 1985, H.E.A.T. tips have led to the recovery of nearly \$49 million in stolen property and the arrests of over 3,200 suspects involved in auto theft rings, chop shops, carjackings and fraudulent car thefts, among other auto-related crimes. H.E.A.T. has paid more than \$3.3 million in tipster rewards over the last 23 years. Anyone with information on auto theft, carjacking, chop shops, auto theft-related identity theft and auto insurance fraud in Michigan is encouraged to call the H.E.A.T. 24/7 tip line and speak to a live operator at 1-800-242-HEAT, or log on to www.1800242HEAT.com to provide a confidential report. H.E.A.T. works with Michigan law enforcement agencies to follow up on tips. Tipsters are awarded up to \$1,000 if the tip leads to the arrest and prosecution of a suspected car thief or a person suspected of auto theft-related insurance fraud. Rewards of up to \$10,000 are issued if a tip results in the arrest and binding over for trial of a suspected theft ring or chop shop operators. H.E.A.T. rewards up to \$2,000 for information leading to the issuance of a warrant for a carjacking suspect. The H.E.A.T. tip line is monitored by the Michigan State Police and funded by Michigan's auto insurance companies.

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Editor's Note: To schedule an interview with Terri Miller, H.E.A.T. director, contact Kim Tassie at 248.362.4200 ext. 243 or ktassie@baileypr.com