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H.E.A.T. URGES HOLIDAY SHOPPERS TO PUT SAFETY FIRST WITH AUTO THEFT PREVENTION TIPS

LIVONIA, Mich. (Nov. 27, 2006) – With the holiday shopping season in full swing, Help Eliminate Auto Thefts (H.E.A.T.) aims to keep safety top-of-mind among preoccupied shoppers who are particularly vulnerable this season.

“Thieves look forward to the holidays when people are distracted and made careless by hectic schedules and lots of tasks,” said Terri Miller, director of H.E.A.T. “Shoppers often take unnecessary risks such as leaving their vehicles unlocked or running and stowing gifts and shopping bags in open view instead of in the trunk.”

To help ensure the 2006 holiday shopping season stays safe for Michigan residents, H.E.A.T. recommends that shoppers take the following precautions:

1. **Park in well-lit areas, near sidewalks or walkways.** Avoid parking near dumpsters or large vans or trucks. These obstacles decrease your ability to see the space surrounding your vehicle clearly, where thieves or carjackers could be hiding.
2. **Consider using the valet service** if you are out at a shopping center alone at night. This small fee is worth your safety. Remember to leave the valet only the ignition key with no I.D. Always keep your registration and proof of insurance in your wallet.
3. **Place gifts in the trunk and out of view.** If need be, use a trash bag, blanket or cardboard box to camouflage packages in the back of a car, van or SUV.
4. **Try to keep one hand free** with the other hand holding your car keys as you approach or leave your vehicle so you can maneuver if you encounter a thief or carjacker.
5. **If threatened by a carjacker with a gun or other weapon, GIVE UP THE CAR. DON'T ARGUE.** A life is more important than any vehicle.
6. **If you witness an auto theft or carjacking, call the police immediately.** If you have any information regarding auto theft, insurance fraud or carjacking, call the H.E.A.T. tip reward line at **1-800-242-H.E.A.T.**

About H.E.A.T.

Since its inception in 1985, H.E.A.T. tips have led to the recovery of over \$42 million in stolen property and the arrests of nearly 3,000 suspects involved in auto theft rings, chop shops, carjackings and fraudulent car thefts, among other crimes.

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Also, H.E.A.T. has paid over \$2.9 million in tipster rewards over the last 21 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. tip line, 1-800-242-H.E.A.T., or log on to www.miheat.org 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, contact Amanda Bechtel at 517.316.0210.