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Warm Weather Months Tempt Car Thieves, HEAT Releases Safety Tips

Livonia, Mich. (June 18, 2004) – According to HEAT (Help Eliminate Auto Thefts) warm weather summer months can lead to carelessness among auto owners, making vehicles easier to steal and personal property inside vehicles more attractive to thieves.

“As warm weather sets in, people tend to relax their guard by leaving car tops and windows down when running errands,” said Terri Miller, Director of HEAT. “This makes it easy for thieves to steal exposed property like purses, laptops and cell phones – not to mention the vehicle itself.”

Tips on keeping your car and belongings safe during warm weather:

- Close windows tightly when you are not with the vehicle – don’t even leave them “cracked.” Don’t leave your car unlocked when going into stores or using ATM’s.
- Keep your personal belongings, CD’s, cell phones and other valuables out of sight.
- Close and lock convertible tops.
- Protect your vehicle from being started by a thief by having a mechanic install a kill-switch in a concealed place in your vehicle.
- 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.
- 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 vehicle can be tagged with a fake VIN and resold.
- If you know anything about auto theft, report it to your local police department and HEAT’s confidential tip-reward line, 1-800-242-HEAT.

About HEAT

Anyone with information on auto theft, carjacking, chop shops and auto insurance fraud in Michigan is encouraged to call the HEAT hotline, **1-800-242-HEAT**, to provide a confidential report. HEAT works with Michigan law enforcement agencies to follow up on tips. Tipsters are awarded up to \$1,000 if their 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. HEAT rewards up to \$2,000 for information leading to the issuance of a warrant for a carjacking suspect. The HEAT hotline is monitored by the Michigan State Police and funded by Michigan’s auto insurance companies.

Editor’s Note: To schedule an interview with a Terri Miller, contact Elizabeth Weigandt at 248.362.4200.