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## H.E.A.T. PROVIDES IMPORTANT TIPS TO HELP KEEP SHOPPERS SAFE THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

**LIVONIA, Mich.** (Nov. 23, 2009) – Help Eliminate Auto Thefts (H.E.A.T.) is aiming to keep safety high on shoppers' lists as the height of the holiday season fast approaches. Unfortunately, it is easy for consumers to become preoccupied with endless errands this time of year, and as a result, find themselves unknowingly and unnecessarily vulnerable to theft or injury.

“It’s important to keep your guard up during the holiday season, as thieves look forward to this time of year when people are distracted by busy schedules and long shopping lists,” said Terri Miller, director of H.E.A.T. “Make sure your vehicle is locked and gifts and shopping bags are placed in the trunk instead of in open view. Don’t give thieves the opportunity to take advantage of you this holiday season.”

To help ensure the 2009 holiday shopping season is a safe one for Michigan drivers, H.E.A.T. recommends the following precautions:

- **Park in well-lit areas, near sidewalks or walkways.** Avoid parking near dumpsters, large vans or trucks, as these obstacles decrease your ability to see the space surrounding your vehicle.
- **Keep one hand free** with the other hand holding your car keys as you approach or leave your vehicle so you can maneuver should you encounter a thief or carjacker.
- **Stay alert to your surroundings.** You could become a target if you are distracted by a cell phone, hunting for your keys or are fumbling with a big pile of packages.
- **Consider using the valet service** if you are out at a shopping center alone at night. The 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.
- **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.
- **Move your car** to another space in the lot if you unload gifts. Don’t tempt a thief who will watch you leave your purchases and go back into the mall or store.
- **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.
- **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 24/7 H.E.A.T. tip reward line at **1-800-242-H.E.A.T.**

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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 more than \$50 million in stolen property and the arrests of more than 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 24 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](http://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, contact Kim Tassie at 248.342.4200 x 243 or [ktassie@baileypr.com](mailto:ktassie@baileypr.com).*