



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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H.E.A.T. WARNS LOCAL DRIVERS OF INCREASE IN UNCONVENTIONAL AUTO-RELATED CRIMES

Increased Vehicle Security Features and Faltering Economy Are Likely Causes

Livonia, Mich. (June 3, 2009) – H.E.A.T. (Help Eliminate Auto Thefts) is cautioning Michigan drivers to be aware of the growing trends in unconventional auto theft-related crimes.

In its 2008 annual report, the Automobile Theft Prevention Authority cites a decrease in traditional auto theft, but noted that auto-related crimes including insurance fraud, arson, identity theft and unique or obscure thefts are on the rise. Increased vehicle security features and the faltering economy are being blamed as the likely causes of the rise in these types of criminal activities.

“It’s important for Michigan residents to be educated on these new schemes,” said Terri Miller, director of H.E.A.T. Miller continued, “We want all drivers to take the appropriate extra precautions to prevent themselves from falling victim to these crimes. Beyond always locking car doors and parking in well-lit areas, H.E.A.T. also encourages residents to pay close attention to their credit reports, limit the distribution of their social security number and always report any suspicious behavior or activities at local businesses or in neighborhoods.”

Some of the auto-related crimes on the rise, include:

- **Component Theft:** Auto parts (including airbags and tires) being stolen and sold to crooked dealers and repair shops.
- **Identity Theft:** Thieves using other people’s identities when purchasing cars.
- **Insurance Fraud:** Vehicles are reported stolen to obtain insurance compensation.
- **Arson:** Vehicles are set on fire in order to obtain insurance compensation.
- **Purchase Assisting:** Individuals are persuaded to act as a purchaser of a vehicle in place of an unqualified buyer who promises to make payments. After the deal, the crook takes the vehicle and leaves the purchaser with no compensation and in debt for the vehicle.

If you have any information on suspicious or criminal auto-related activity in your community, contact the police department immediately, then report the tip to H.E.A.T. at 1-800-242-HEAT or www.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 more than \$50 million in stolen property and the arrests of more than 3,000 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 \$3.2 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 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
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