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H.E.A.T. Warns Drivers Of Increase In Unconventional Auto Theft Crimes

Carjackings, insurance fraud and vehicle cloning on the rise in Michigan

Livonia, Mich. (June 5, 2013) – Auto thefts in Michigan are in a five-year decline, but other forms of vehicle-related crime are on the rise, according to Help Eliminate Auto Thefts (H.E.A.T.), a statewide insurance industry-funded theft prevention program and confidential tip line.

“As technology in vehicles increases, and law enforcement continues to successfully put criminals behind bars, thieves are looking for new ways to target Michigan drivers,” said Terri Miller, director of H.E.A.T. “Drivers need to be aware of the evolving trends, and how to protect themselves and their property.”

Some of the unconventional auto theft-related crimes on the rise in Michigan include:

- **Insurance Fraud:** Vehicles are reported “stolen” to obtain insurance compensation or false documentation is provided to obtain insurance, titles and registrations for stolen cars. Not only are these criminal actions, they also result in increased insurance rates for all Michigan drivers. Over 25,000 vehicles were reported stolen in Michigan in 2011.
- **Online Fraud:** Thieves are turning to online purchasing sites like Craigslist.com and local sites like cars4detroit.com as easy outlets for selling or trading stolen, cloned, or re-tagged vehicles and stolen auto parts. The lesson for consumers, according to Miller: “If the deal is too good to be true, it probably is.”
- **Vehicle Re-Tagging/Cloning:** Thieves obtain legitimate VIN numbers from cars matching the year, make, model and color of a stolen vehicle and duplicate the identifying digits, allowing them to re-sell the car with fake paperwork without it being flagged as stolen.
- **Component Theft:** Catalytic converter thefts are increasing once again, due to high demand for the precious metals inside the converters. Other vehicle parts, including tires, rims, airbags and navigation systems, remain hot items for thieves and are being stolen and sold to crooked dealers and repair shops.
- **Carjacking:** Thieves need your keys to steal newer vehicles, so they are getting bolder about approaching their victims. Most carjackings involve weapons, so give up your car and quickly exit the scene. No vehicle is worth your life. Stay alert for carjackers at the gas station and retail store parking lots.

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H.E.A.T. encourages anyone with information on suspicious or criminal auto theft-related activity in your community to report the tip to H.E.A.T. at 1-800-242-HEAT or www.1800242HEAT.com. All tips are confidential.

About H.E.A.T.

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 of or issuance of a warrant for a suspected car thief or a person suspected of auto theft-related insurance fraud. H.E.A.T. rewards up to \$2,000 for information leading to the issuance of a warrant for a carjacking suspect. Rewards of up to \$10,000 are issued if a tip results in the arrest and binding over for trial of suspected theft ring or chop shop operators. The H.E.A.T. tip line is monitored by the Michigan State Police and funded by Michigan's auto insurance companies.

Follow H.E.A.T. on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/1800242HEAT) and on Twitter [@1800242HEAT](https://twitter.com/1800242HEAT).

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Editor's Note: To schedule an interview with Terri Miller, contact Abby Brant at 616-233-0500 or abrant@lambert-edwards.com