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La Porte Police Urge Residents to Lock Vehicles as Part of State Wide “Watch Your Car” Initiative

Unlike those who might enjoy a much-needed vacation this time of year, criminals responsible for motor vehicle burglary and other related thefts typically take no break during the summer months. Stolen vehicle offenses have proven to be of no exception. Because of this unfortunate reality, the La Porte Police Department urges vehicle owners to recall the revolving annual statistic published by the Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT), which highlights the fact that nearly every five minutes a car is stolen in Texas. What’s more, when vehicles are either stolen or broken into, driver possessions such as credit cards and other personal information disappear as well. Therefore, to prevent such crimes, citizens are reminded to remove or conceal belongings located inside of their vehicles, lock all doors, and take the keys.

Locally, some 147 vehicles have either been burglarized or stolen during the first half of 2010. These crimes not only cause immediate anguish for the owners of the stolen or burglarized vehicles, but also result in all Texas motorists becoming crime victims, as vehicle insurance rates are directly affected by the amount of reported offenses. These crimes have been particularly difficult for the police to address as some 88% of the involved vehicles had been left unlocked by their owners. In many of the cases valuable property had also been left in open view and in a few incidents the keys were left inside of the vehicle.

Fortunately, to help increase statewide awareness of this ongoing problem, TXDOT has designated July as "Watch Your Car" month. During this period, hundreds of law enforcement task force representatives, funded by the Texas Auto Burglary and Theft Prevention Authority (ABTPA), will be out in several communities, reminding Texas drivers to take extra precautions when leaving their vehicles unattended.

The focus of the “Watch Your Car” campaign for this year is vehicle owners leaving their vehicles unlocked and unattended with the keys left in the ignition. TXDOT notes that approximately 50% of the vehicles stolen in Texas last year had the keys left inside. Additionally, in 2009, an estimated 76,617 motor vehicles were stolen, with statistics from various law enforcement agencies revealing the top three locations as: residences/homes (41.6%), parking lot/garages (28.7%) and highway/roadway/alleyways (12.2%).

LPPD, ABTPA, and TXDOT continue to press on with the fight against these criminals; however proactive citizens truly “Hold the Keys” to preventing such crimes. Most vehicle burglaries and thefts could be prevented if the vehicle was properly secured, valuables were secured or hidden from sight, and the keys were removed. By following these simple steps, as well as investing in one of the many commercial vehicle anti-theft devices available, residents will certainly discourage criminals and play a direct role in keeping their neighborhoods safe. For more information on how you can protect yourself against motor vehicle theft and other related burglaries, contact the La Porte Police Department at 281-842-2141.