

## PRESS PACKET FOR JULY 2009 WATCH YOUR CAR CAMPAIGN

### 2008 TEXAS TOP STOLEN VEHICLES

Pickups are not only popular among Texas Drivers; they are also the top targets for Texas vehicle thieves! The Texas Department of Public Safety has released its final report on the top vehicles stolen in Texas during 2008 and Pickups hold the No. 1, 2 & 3 vehicle positions again. Coming in at No. 1 is the Ford Pickup. In the No. 2 position, the Chevy Pickup, also remains a popular target for Texas thieves. The Dodge Pickup is in the No. 3 position. The complete top 10 list includes:

### 2008 TEXAS TOP 10 STOLEN VEHICLES

1. Ford Pickup	7,365
2. Chevy Pickup	4,570
3. Dodge Pickup	4,030
4. Honda Civic	2,580
5. Honda Accord	2,076
6. Chevy Tahoe	1,720
7. GMC Pickup	1,224
8. Ford Taurus	1,001
9. Toyota Camry	791
10. Ford Mustang	651

Vehicles are stolen for a variety of reasons, and contrary to popular belief, the most stolen vehicles are several years old. Some are stolen and stripped for parts. Others are stolen and resold by the thief to another party. Many vehicles are stolen for joyriding, robbery, for use in committing other crimes, to support drug habits, drug smuggling or to perpetrate insurance fraud. **Vehicle theft costs Texans more money than any other crime.** According to the Texas Department of Public Safety Uniform Crime Report, there were **85,411 vehicles stolen in 2008.** There were 254,758 thefts from motor vehicles including motor vehicle parts with an economic loss of \$214,099,543. 6,337 people were arrested in 2008 for vehicle theft. It is important that we acknowledge this trend and educate the citizens of Texas in how to protect their car.

## **ABOUT THE T TEXAS AUTO BURGLARY AND THEFT PREVENTION AUTHORITY (ABTPA)**

**The Texas Automobile Theft Prevention Authority (ABTPA)**, a division of the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDot), has distributed funds to law enforcement programs specializing in vehicle theft investigation, recovery, prevention and prosecution. Established by the 72<sup>nd</sup> Texas Legislature, in 1991, the Texas Automobile Theft Prevention Authority (ATPA now ABTPA) supports a statewide law enforcement network through grants, theft reduction initiatives, education and public awareness, funds a statewide vehicle registration program and works with border states in Mexico to reduce the number of stolen vehicles crossing the Texas/Mexico border. In addition to Vehicle Thefts, the ABTPA (Automobile Burglary & Theft Prevention Authority) also addresses the problem of Vehicle Burglaries.

The ABTPA has awarded Grants to Projects since 1993. In 2009 it awarded \$12,750,000 to 29 Grant Projects. Since its inception auto theft rates in Texas have been reduced by 61%.

Board of Directors: Policy for ATPA is set by a seven-member Board of Directors, six of which are appointed by the Governor. Board members include two law enforcement representatives, two consumer representatives, and two insurance representatives. The executive director of the Texas Department of Public Safety serves as an ex-officio member of the board.

## **ABOUT THE EAST TEXAS AUTO THEFT TASK FORCE**

**The East Texas Auto Theft Task Force (ETATTF)** is the ABTPA Task force covering our area. It is a multi-agency Task Force which is represented by the Smith Co. District Attorney's Office, the Smith Co. Sheriff's Office, the Tyler Police Department, the Rusk Co. Sheriff's Office, the Upshur Co. Sheriff's Office and the Texas Department of Public Safety. Their office is located in Tyler and can be contacted by calling 903-593-6090.

More information regarding auto theft can be obtained at the ABTPA Web Site:

[www.dot.state.tx.us/atpa](http://www.dot.state.tx.us/atpa) or by calling  
1-800-carwatch or 1-800-227-9282

More information on the East Texas Auto Theft Task Force (ETATTF) can be located on the City of Tyler Web site under the police section.

## **JULY WATCH YOUR CAR MONTH**

July is Watch Your Car Awareness Month in Texas and the East Texas Auto Theft Task Force and the Automobile Prevention Authority (ATPA) warn Texans they need to actively protect themselves against vehicle theft.

While there is no totally foolproof way to prevent theft, the ATPA recommends a few common-sense steps to help protect your car.

## **NO COST PRECAUTIONS TO PROTECT YOUR CAR**

1. **Take Your Keys.** Approximately 50% of vehicles stolen in Texas had the keys in it.
  2. **Lock Your Car.** Approximately half of all vehicles stolen were left unlocked.
  3. **Never Hide a Second Set of Keys in Your Car.** Extra keys can easily be found if a thief takes time to look.
  4. **Park in Well-Lighted Areas.**
  5. **Park in attended Lots.** Auto thieves do not like witnesses and prefer unattended parking lots.
  6. **If You Park in an Attended Lot, Leave Only the Ignition/Door Key.** If your trunk and glove box use the same key as the door, have one of them changed. Don't give the attendant easy access to your glove box and trunk. Upon returning, check the tires, spare and battery to insure they are the same as those you had when you parked.
  7. **Never Leave Your Car Running, Even if You'll Only Be Gone for a Minute.** Vehicles are commonly stolen at convenience stores, gas stations, ATM's, etc. Many vehicles are also stolen on cold mornings when the owner leaves the vehicle running to warm up or on hot days to keep the vehicle cool.
- Leaving your key in an unattended motor vehicle is a crime in Texas punishable by a fine of up to \$200.**
8. **Completely Close Car Windows When Parking.** Don't make it any easier for the thief to enter your vehicle.
  9. **Don't Leave Valuables in Plain View.** Don't make your car a more desirable target for thieves by leaving valuables in plain sight.

## **INVESTING IN VEHICLE PROTECTION**

1. **Ignition Kill Switch.** Splice an inexpensive toggle switch into your ignition wire or to your starter. The trick is hiding the switch well. Keypads, pressure pads and more expensive "Immobilizers" and "Passkeys" can also be used.
2. **Fuel Kill Switch.** The valve that halts the fuel supply is closed.
3. **Visible steering wheel lock.** Prevents the steering wheel from being turned.
4. **Floorboard Locks.** Devices that disable the gas or brake pedal.
5. **Gearshift Locks.** Disables shifting of the transmission.
6. **Tire/Wheel Locks.** Prevents the vehicle from moving.
7. **Hood Locks.** Prevents the thief from gaining access to your security system and battery.
8. **Armored collar around the steering column.** Protects the column and ignition.
9. **Alarms.** Security systems which make loud warning sounds when door/hood/trunk are opened. Optional sensors detect glass breakage, motion,

- tampering, and towing. Panic buttons, back-up batteries, flashing parking lights or headlights, and automatic engine disable features are also popular.
10. **Vehicle Tracking.** Transmitter hidden in car enables police to track car (may not be available in all areas).

*Many car insurance companies may give you a discount for certain anti-theft devices. Check with your agent for details.*

### **BEWARE OF “HOT” USED CAR DEALS**

Not all stolen cars are stripped for parts. Many are resold to unknowing and unsuspecting buyers. If you knowingly buy a stolen car, you can be arrested. If you buy a stolen car unknowingly, you could lose the car and your money. Avoid becoming the car thief's second victim by following these tips:

1. **Be suspicious of any deal that seems “too good to be true.”**
2. **When buying from a private individual, make sure that the title and registration match the name and address of the person selling the car.**
3. **Be cautious of a seller with no fixed address, place of employment or phone number.**
4. **Ask the seller for references about past financing and insurance on the vehicle. Verify the information with the bank, finance company or agent.**
5. **Ensure the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) plate on the automobile's dash is present, secure and has no loose rivets.**
6. **Check to ensure the VIN plate has not been repainted and the numbers stamped in the plate appear to be the original factory numbers.**
7. **Thieves may remove the VIN plate and replace it with one from a similar wrecked vehicle. If in doubt about plate authenticity, check with a new car dealer who handles the same model or contact a law enforcement agency.**

### **H.E.A.T. (Help End Auto Theft)**

**This Program is FREE.** (It is provided at no cost to the citizens of Texas).

H.E.A.T. is a statewide vehicle registration program administered by the Texas Department of Public Safety to help law enforcement officials identify stolen vehicles.

Vehicle owners obtain a window decal that authorizes law enforcement officers to stop the automobile between 1 a.m. and 5 a.m. statewide. These are the hours when most of the vehicle thefts occur.

There are two types of decals that can be added to the front window to help prevent the car from being driven illegally into Mexico.

- A white decal authorizes officials to stop the car between the hours of 1 a.m. and 5 a.m. statewide.
- A border decal authorizes officers to stop the vehicle and check ownership any time the vehicle crosses the border into Mexico.

There are currently 23,676 vehicles registered in the H.E.A.T. Program.

#### **Four Ways to Register:**

1. Mail/Brochure Order. Download Application (in Adobe Acrobat). Mailing address: H.E.A.T. Registration  
Texas Department of Public Safety  
P.O. Box 4143  
Austin, Texas 78765
2. Online at: [https://records.txdps.state.tx.us/DPS\\_WEB/Heat/index.aspx](https://records.txdps.state.tx.us/DPS_WEB/Heat/index.aspx)
3. Call your local police department or sheriff's office. (In our area those agencies will be Tyler Police Department, Smith Co. Sheriff's Office, Rusk Co. Sheriff's Office, Longview Police Department and Gregg Co. Sheriff's Office.
4. Call the H.E.A.T. Office in Austin at 1-888-447-5933 or 512-424-2962.

Many insurance companies offer a rate reduction for participation in the H.E.A.T. Program and using other devices to prevent your vehicle from being stolen.

#### **TRIP (TEXAS RECOVERY AND IDENTIFICATION PROGRAM)**

**This Program is Free.** It is provided at no cost to the citizens of Texas.

544 pieces of Construction Equipment and 999 pieces of Farm Equipment were reported stolen during 2008 in Texas.

The Trip Program is a new program sponsored by the Texas Department of Public Safety and is administered by the same personnel in Austin as the H.E.A.T. Program. It is a program for registering heavy equipment, both farm and commercial. At the time of sale, the purchaser of the equipment usually receives only a bill of sale, if any paperwork at all. Since the equipment is not registered and entered into a data base, it is difficult to identify the owner when suspected stolen equipment is located by law enforcement. The

TRIP Program allows your equipment to be entered into a data base in much the same way as your car is entered when registered. The owner's information and phone number are entered to enable law enforcement to quickly identify and return stolen equipment to its proper owner. Currently there are 4,089 pieces of heavy equipment registered in the Trip Program.

**Ways to Register in the TRIP Program:**

1. Online Registration is available at:  
**<https://records.txdps.state.tx.us/default.cfm>**
2. Contact the TRIP Program by telephone at 1-888-447-5933.
3. Contact by mail at: Texas Recovery and Identification Program  
Texas Department of Public Safety  
P.O. Box 4143  
Austin, Texas 78765

Any questions or comment may be directed to:

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