

## Help End Auto Theft

### Register in the Texas H.E.A.T. Program

Texas is the first state to implement a statewide vehicle registration program aimed at reducing auto theft during nighttime hours. Vehicle owners not normally using their vehicles between 1 a.m. and 5 a.m. sign an agreement allowing peace officers to stop a vehicle and verify ownership if they observe it being driven during those hours. Owners may extend additional authority at the time of registration to have the vehicle stopped for verification 24-hours-a-day at the Texas-Mexico border.

The advantage of Texas H.E.A.T. over citywide decal programs is that peace officers throughout the state have immediate access to data. Even if the thief has removed the decals, the officer will know the vehicle is registered in Texas H.E.A.T. when accessing license plate information. **Registration is one penny per vehicle and is good as long as the vehicle owner owns the registered vehicle or until he/she notifies the registering agency of their desire to be removed from the program.**

For further information about Texas H.E.A.T., contact any local law enforcement agency or call **1-800-CAR-WATCH.**

### Information You Need To Know

If your car is stolen, promptly report it to the police. Make sure you have the vehicle year, make, model, color, vehicle identification number and license plate number available to help insure recovery.

For more auto theft prevention information, contact

**1-800-CAR-WATCH**

or **www.txwatchyourcar.com**

or contact your local law enforcement agency.



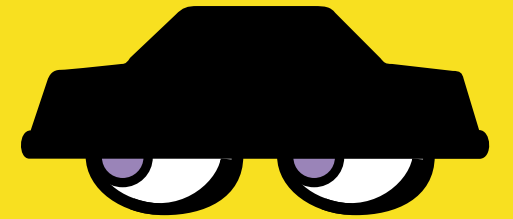
*The ATPA Fund is established under Texas legislation through a \$1 assessment per insured vehicle per year. The fee is assessed by all insurance agencies insuring vehicles in Texas and is collected by the Comptroller of Public Accounts for the Automobile Theft Prevention Authority.*

## 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:*

- 31.** Be suspicious of any deal that seems "too good to be true."
- 32.** When buying from a private individual, make sure the title and registration match the name and address of the person selling the car.
- 33.** Be cautious of a seller with no fixed address, place of employment or phone number.
- 34.** Ask the seller for references about past financing and insurance on the vehicle. Verify the information with the bank, finance company, or agent.
- 35.** Ensure the *vehicle identification number (VIN)* plate on the automobile's dash is present, secure, and has no loose rivets.
- 36.** Check to ensure the VIN plate has not been repainted and the numbers stamped in the plate appear to be original factory numbers.
- 37.** Ensure the VIN plate rivets are original. All 1970 and newer autos produced in North America have stainless steel "rosette" rivets with six petals and a hole in the middle. They are difficult to scratch with a knife.
- 38.** 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.
- 39.** The VIN on the dash must match the VIN on the registration, title and federal safety inspection sticker on the driver's door.
- 40.** If the VIN plate is scratched, bent or missing rivets, tampering may have occurred.
- 41.** Make sure the federal safety inspection sticker, located on the driver's door or door jamb, is securely in place and none of the numbers appear to be tampered with.
- 42.** Beware of a loose dashboard.
- 43.** An excessively loose ignition switch may indicate tampering. Check the switch for chisel or pull marks.
- 44.** Be wary of a fresh paint job on a newer vehicle. This may indicate an attempt to change the car's identity.
- 45.** Check the inspection and license plate registration stickers to be sure they are current and issued by the same state.
- 46.** If the seller provides you with only re-made keys, not original manufacturer's keys, for a newer model car, be suspicious.
- 47.** Titles and registrations are frequently counterfeited. Therefore, demand the title before paying, and make sure it matches the registration. By completing all paperwork at the time of sale, you avoid giving the thief extra time to obtain fraudulent documents.
- 48.** Question the seller if the registration was recently issued on an older vehicle.
- 49.** Compare the engine identification numbers with all other VIN numbers to ensure a match.
- 50.** Be cautious of new license plates on an old car, or new plate bolts on an older plate.

# 50 Ways to



**Watch Your Car™**  
TEXAS AUTOMOBILE THEFT PREVENTION AUTHORITY

## 1-800-CAR-WATCH

[www.txwatchyourcar.com](http://www.txwatchyourcar.com)

Texas Department of Transportation  
North Central Texas Council of Governments

# Make Your Car Tough To Steal

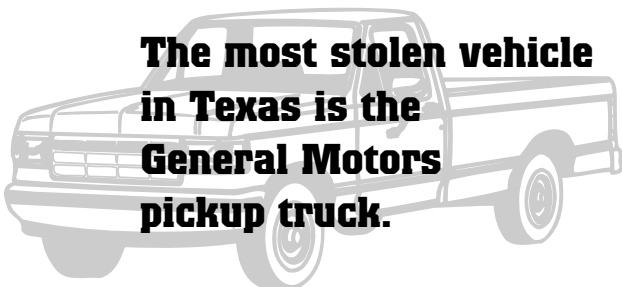
A vehicle is stolen every 25 seconds in the United States. **Auto theft is big business!** If auto theft were legalized and incorporated, it would rank in the top 250 among Fortune 500 companies.

Your vehicle is one of the largest investments you make. New vehicles are not the only target for car thieves. Older model vehicles are also very desirable. Thieves look for cars that can be resold quickly or stripped for parts. In most cases, a vehicle's parts are worth two to three times the value of the vehicle.

No vehicle or anti-theft device is 100% theft-proof, and discouraging thieves is not an easy task. A thief's greatest enemy is time. The more difficult your car is to steal, the longer it takes to be stolen. And the more time a thief has to spend stealing your car, the greater the chance of detection. By making your car a tougher target, the thief will probably move on to a car that is easier to steal.

By installing anti-theft devices on your vehicle, you may qualify for a discount on your comprehensive insurance rates. To find out more about anti-theft device discounts, contact your automobile insurance company or agent.

**The most stolen vehicle in Texas is the General Motors pickup truck.**



## “No Cost” Precautions

- 1. Take Your Keys.** Nearly 20% of all vehicles stolen had the keys in them.
- 2. Lock Your Car.** Approximately 50% 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.** Over half of all vehicle thefts occur at night.
- 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 glovebox use the same key as the door, have one of them changed. Don't give the attendant easy access to your glovebox 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. Leaving your key in an unattended motor vehicle is a crime in Texas.
- 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 and attract thieves by leaving valuables in plain sight.
- 10. Park With Your Wheels Turned Towards the Curb.** Make your car tough to tow away. Wheels should also be turned to the side in driveways and parking lots.
- 11. If Your Vehicle is Rear-Wheel Drive, Back Into Your Driveway.** Front-wheel drive vehicles should be

parked front end first. On four-wheel drive vehicles the rear wheels sometimes lock, making them difficult to tow.

- 12. Always Use Your Emergency Brake When Parking.** In addition to ensuring safety, using the emergency brake makes your car harder to tow.
- 13. If You Have a Garage, Use It.** If you have a garage, take the time to use it rather than parking outside where your vehicle is more vulnerable.
- 14. When Parking in a Garage, Lock the Garage Door and Your Vehicle.** By locking both the garage and vehicle doors, the chances of deterring a thief greatly improve.
- 15. Don't Leave the Registration or Title in Your Car.** A car thief will use these to sell your stolen car. File the title at your home or office, and carry registration in your purse or wallet.
- 16. Disable Your Vehicle When Leaving it Unattended for an Extended Period.** Remove the electronic ignition fuse, coil wire, rotor distributor, or otherwise disable your vehicle anytime thieves may have extended access to it.
- 17. Replace “T”-shaped Door Locks With Straight Locks.** Some vehicle doors have lock assemblies at window level that flare out in a knob or “T” shape. A thief can use various tools to gain access inside the vehicle, grab and pull the lock. Straight locks prevent this.
- 18. Vehicle Identification Number (VIN).** Stolen cars/parts are more easily traced when vehicle VIN numbers have been etched on car windows and major parts.
- 19. Engrave Expensive Accessories.** Engrave personal I.D. numbers on car stereos, cellular phones, etc., so the thief will have difficulty disposing of them.
- 20. Drop Business Cards, Address Labels, or Other I.D. Inside Vehicle Doors.** Car thieves usually alter vehicle identification numbers. By marking your vehicle as much as possible, you assist police in identifying your car.

## Investing In Vehicle Protection

- 21. Ignition Kill Switch.** Splice an inexpensive toggle switch into your ignition wire or starter. The trick is hiding the switch well. Keypads, pressure pads and more expensive “Immobilizers” and “Passkeys” can also be used.
- 22. Fuel Kill Switch.** The valve that enables the flow of fuel is closed when the switch is off.
- 23. Visible Steering Wheel Lock.** Prevents the steering wheel from being turned properly.
- 24. Floorboard Locks.** Devices that disable the gas or brake pedal.
- 25. Gearshift Locks.** Disable shifting of the transmission by locking it in place.
- 26. Tire/Wheel Locks.** Wrap around the wheel and prevent the vehicle from moving.
- 27. Hood Locks.** Prevent the thief from gaining access to your security system and battery.
- 28. Armored Collar Around the Steering Column.** Protects the column and ignition.

### Electronic Security Systems.

- 29. Alarms.** Loud warnings sound when doors/hood/trunk are opened. Optional sensors include glass breakage, motion, tampering, and towing. Panic buttons, back-up batteries, flashing parking lights or headlights, and automatic engine disable features are also recommended.
- 30. Vehicle Tracking.** Silent transmitter hidden in car enables police to track the car.

