



TxDMV \* 4000 JACKSON AVENUE, AUSTIN, TEXAS 78731 | media@dmv.state.tx.us | www.TxDMV.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE June 14, 2010 Julia Bardnell (512) 374.5101 jbardne@dmv.state.tx.us

## Auto Burglary and Theft Prevention Authority Summit focuses on improving law enforcement communication to protect Texans

GALVESTON – Law enforcement and insurance industry representatives from across the state are gathered here this week to strengthen their efforts to protect Texans from auto theft and burglary.

Texas police chiefs, officers and troopers are working on improving interagency communications at the Auto Burglary and Theft Prevention Authority (ABTPA)'s annual summit, which runs through Thursday at the San Luis Hotel.

"By improving communication and building relationships between state agencies, police and sheriff's departments, and the insurance industry, we are putting would-be criminals on notice that you will be found," said Charles Caldwell, director of the ABTPA. "Texans can be assured law enforcement is doing everything possible to protect their vehicles."

The summit is being hosted locally by the Galveston County Auto Crimes Task Force. The more than 200 participants will receive training on a national electronic database that will allow law enforcement to access vehicle title information from any state; innovative auto theft investigation techniques; and insurance investigation units.

Last year, auto thefts in Texas were reduced by ten percent, but preliminary figures from the Texas Department of Public Safety show auto burglary increased by five percent.

Lt. Tommy Hansen of the Galveston County Auto Crimes Task Force and the International Association of Auto Theft Investigators past president, said Texans also must to do their part to protect their vehicles from burglary and theft.

"It's up to drivers to be proactive and follow the Auto Burglary and Theft Prevention Authority's advice to always hide any belongings, such as store purchases, purses and portable music players or GPS units, lock the car, and take the keys," Lt. Hansen said.

Additionally, many people do not realize it is illegal for them to leave their keys in the ignition or their engines running while unattended, even for a few minutes. It only takes a car thief a short time to steal your car. For Watch Your Car month in July, ABTPA task forces will be reminding Texas drivers about this law, beginning with a statewide coordinated event on July 1 in all task force coverage areas.

The Galveston County task force is one of 28 law enforcement agencies and auto theft deterrent programs that receive grant funds from the Texas Department of Motor Vehicle's burglary and theft prevention authority. Since the authority began in 1991, it has awarded 485 grants totaling more than \$184 million to combat auto burglary and theft.

For more information on the authority and to find auto burglary and theft prevention tips, go to <a href="https://www.txwatchyourcar.com">www.txwatchyourcar.com</a> or <a href="https://www.txwatchyourcar.com">www.txxDMV.gov</a>. The authority can also be contacted at (512) 374-5101.

## About Us

The Texas Automobile Burglary and Theft Prevention Authority (ABTPA), supports a statewide network through grants, theft reduction initiatives, and public awareness/education. Since its inception in 1991, ABTPA has funded and managed 485 grants which have reduced motor vehicle theft by 66 percent. For more information on ABTPA and prevention tips, go to <a href="https://www.txwatchyourcar.com">www.txwatchyourcar.com</a> or call (512) 374-5101. Fan us on <a href="facebook">Facebook</a> or follow us on <a href="fwitter">Twitter</a>.

The Texas Department of Vehicles (TxDMV) is responsible for vehicle registration and titling, issuing motor carrier operating authority, motor carrier enforcement, licensing vehicle dealers, and awarding law enforcement agencies grants to reduce auto theft and increase public awareness. Visit www.TxDMV.gov for more information about the state agency.

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