



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

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE July 2, 2012

Media Contacts:
Julia Bardnell, Auto Burglary and Theft Prevention Authority
512-374-5103, julia.bardnell@txdmv.gov



Melanie Fish, EnviroMedia Social Marketing 512-476-4368, ext. 321, mfish@enviromedia.com

# New Research Reveals Auto Crime Myths Statewide awareness campaign uses reformed criminal to educate Texans during Watch Your Car month

AUSTIN, Texas — For July's Watch Your Car month, a reformed auto thief is helping Texans protect their vehicles.

Based on recent research revealing that most Texans don't know the truth about auto crime, a new statewide campaign launched today to educate and equip drivers during the month when auto crime is at its highest. The campaign, featuring messages and insights from a reformed auto thief, appears in radio ads, on billboards, online, on mobile phones and in movie theaters across the state.

Research conducted by the Auto Burglary and Theft Prevention Authority (ABTPA) demonstrates that many Texans don't realize auto crime is a problem. They also don't know the basics about auto crime: who is committing the crimes, for what purposes, where and when. As a result, the ABTPA developed a statewide campaign, "Think Like a Thief," designed to give Texas drivers an insider's view into auto crime and how to best protect their vehicles and themselves.

"Auto crime occurs every two minutes in Texas, and the Auto Burglary and Theft Prevention Authority is committed to helping drivers reduce the likelihood they will become a victim," said Charles Caldwell, director of the ABTPA. "The 'Think Like a Thief' campaign is launching during July, when Texas drivers are more likely to make mistakes that can lead to auto crime."

#### **Research Statistics**

The ABTPA conducted a statewide quantitative phone survey of 300 Texas drivers in March 2012, which revealed many misperceptions about auto crime. 60 percent of respondents stated that they do not consider auto crime a problem, citing identity theft and home burglary as more concerning, yet statistics show they are 123 percent more likely to become a victim of auto crime. Other common misperceptions: 60 percent of respondents mistakenly identified auto theft and burglary as an individual crime of opportunity, when statistics show it is most often an organized group effort; and 58 percent of respondents incorrectly stated that auto crime most often occurs overnight.

"We ask Texans to take basic precautions, such as the Hide-Lock-Take method: Hide your valuables, lock your car, take your keys," said Caldwell. "Believe it or not, about half of all stolen vehicles are unlocked, often with keys in the ignition."

#### Think Like a Thief

The ABTPA's new statewide campaign features insights from reformed auto criminals educating Texas drivers about the importance of the Hide-Lock-Take method and other important insights about auto crime.

- Because of the heat, Texas drivers are more likely to leave vehicles running during the summer when making quick stops. However, vehicles can be stolen in as little as 15 seconds.
- Auto criminals often work in pairs or groups, with a lookout who notifies team members when cars are left running, unlocked or with valuables in plain sight.
- No driver is immune to auto crime. Drivers are vulnerable to auto crime no matter where they live, work, shop or socialize.
- Hiding valuables, locking the car and taking the keys are basic steps all drivers can easily follow in order to avoid becoming a victim.
- Auto crime often occurs during the day, in large parking lots of popular public venues.
- Auto crime is a "gateway" crime, often leading to other crimes such as home burglary, insurance fraud, identity theft, drug smuggling, robbery, terrorism and gang-related crimes.

### **About the Auto Burglary and Theft Prevention Authority**

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 570 grants – reducing motor vehicle theft by 70 percent. For more information on ABTPA and for prevention tips, go to <a href="https://www.txwatchyourcar.com">www.txwatchyourcar.com</a> or call (512) 374-5101.

The Texas Department of Motor Vehicles (TxDMV) is charged with overseeing the state's motor vehicle services that provide consumer protection, assist motor vehicle-related businesses and raise revenue for the state. For every \$1 it spends, the TxDMV returns \$10 to build and maintain highways, roads and bridges and provide needed services to Texans. Each year the agency registers almost 22 million vehicles; regulates vehicle dealers; credentials buses and big trucks for intrastate and interstate commerce; and awards grants to law enforcement agencies to reduce vehicle burglaries and thefts. Learn more at www.TxDMV.gov.

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