

# PROJECT STAY ALERT

An Online Theft Prevention Education Program of  
The Fort Worth Police Department

Theft Prevention Education About

## Auto Theft

# The Fort Worth Police Department Auto Theft Section E-Prevention Program

This **PROJECT STAY ALERT** slideshow is the production of the Fort Worth Police Department Auto Theft Section. We're excited that computer technology offers us another tool to help reduce your risk of being the victim of a Theft crime. We call the use of the internet to perform crime prevention education: "*E-Prevention.*"

Our department's mission is to provide quality service in partnership with the community to create a safe environment for all. Join us in accomplishing this mission by practicing these principles and reducing your degree of risk to violent crime - **STAY ALERT.**

# ATTENTION

THIS PRESENTATION IS NOT A SELF-DEFENSE COURSE. IT IS A COMMON SENSE APPROACH TO THEFT PREVENTION AND PERSONAL SAFETY.

YOUR DECISIONS CAN INCREASE OR DECREASE YOUR POTENTIAL FOR BEING A CRIME VICTIM.

# Auto Theft

(817) 392-4400

# The Theft Threat

In Texas, theft is unlawfully appropriating the property of another with the intent to deprive the owner of the property and the level of the offense is based on the value of the property stolen.

## SOME THEFT FACTS

- A car is stolen in Texas every 5 minutes. No matter what kind of vehicle you drive, old or new – car or truck – you could be the next victim.
- Vehicle theft is the nation's number one property crime, costing an estimated \$7.6 billion each year.
- One out of every five vehicles stolen had the keys in it.

*Sources: Texas Department of Transportation / National Insurance Crime Bureau / Tarrant County District Attorney*

# Tips to Protect Your Vehicle

- Take Your Keys. One out of every five vehicles stolen had the keys in it.
- Lock Your Car. Almost half of all vehicles stolen were left unlocked.
- Don't Hide a Second Set of Keys in Your Car. Extra keys can easily be found if a thief takes time to look.
- Park in Well-Lighted Areas.
- Don't leave your car running unattended. 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.
- Completely Close Car Windows When Parking. Don't make it any easier for the thief to enter your vehicle.
- Hide Your Valuables. Don't make your car a more desirable target for thieves by leaving valuables in plain sight.

Source: Texas Department of Transportation

# Anti-Theft Devices

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

Some of these devices may require a reputable mechanic for installation.

- 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.
- Fuel Kill Switch. The valve that halts the fuel supply is closed.
- Visible Steering Wheel Lock. Prevents the steering wheel from being turned.
- Floorboard Locks. Devices that disable the gas or brake pedal.
- Gearshift Locks. Disables shifting of the transmission.

# Anti-Theft Devices

## Continued

- Tire/Wheel Locks. Prevents the vehicle from moving.
- Hood Locks. Prevents the thief from gaining access to your security system and battery.
- Armored Collar Around the Steering Column. Protects the column and ignition.
- Alarms. Security systems which make loud warning sounds when doors/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.
- Vehicle Tracking. Transmitter hidden in car enables police to track car (may not be available in all areas).

Source: Texas Department of Transportation

# How to Spot a Stolen Vehicle

Many stolen vehicles are sold to 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. To avoid becoming the car thief's second victim, we urge you to keep these tips in mind:

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

# Is There a "Chop Shop" in your Neighborhood?

The term "chop shop" is defined as:

- any building, lot, facility, or other structure or premise where one or more persons engage in receiving, concealing, destroying, disassembling, dismantling, reassembling, or storing any passenger, industrial or commercial motor vehicle part which has been unlawfully obtained in order to alter, counterfeit, deface, destroy, disguise, falsify, forge, obliterate, or remove the identity, including the vehicle identification number or derivative thereof, of such vehicle or vehicle part and to distribute, sell, or dispose of such vehicle or vehicle part in interstate or foreign commerce.

# Chop Shops

- In other words, a “chop shop” is a place where stolen vehicles are disassembled for the purpose of reselling parts to the private, commercial markets or individual buyers. Unlike the vehicle itself, automotive parts don't usually contain unique identification numbers. So once these parts have been stripped from a stolen vehicle, it becomes very difficult for law enforcement personnel to not only identify the parts, but determine from what vehicle they originated.

# Chop Shops

- A chop shop is a lucrative enterprise, where the operator can earn several times—two to four times in some cases—the value of the stolen vehicle by selling individual parts as opposed to the vehicle itself. For example, a thief can expect to earn about \$100 - \$200 for a stolen airbag. A disreputable body shop buys it and later installs the stolen air bag. The body shop then bills the insurance company \$1,500 - \$2,000, the retail price for a new airbag ordered from a manufacturer. Sometimes, because of scarcity (parts which are no longer manufactured or sold commercially), stolen automotive parts have a tendency to appreciate in value as they age.

# Chop Shops

- The common denominator in any chop shop operation is the vehicle itself, which is most oftentimes stolen. By vehicles we mean motorcycles, passenger cars, industrial or construction equipment, or commercial motor vehicles. Without delivery of a steady stream of stolen vehicles, a chop shop can't make money, so this fact continues to be the single, most important factor for bystanders and local residents that a chop shop may exist in your neighborhood.

# Chop Shops

Other common indicators may include:

- People unfamiliar to your neighborhood are seen frequenting a residential or commercial property in your neighborhood, usually at odd hours.
- A driver is observed entering a residential or commercial property, but is later observed leaving on foot or inside another vehicle.
- Stolen vehicles are often concealed quickly upon delivery to a chop shop. The vehicle might be driven inside of an outbuilding, such as a shed or detached garage, or be driven inside of a commercial structure such as a warehouse. Some vehicles are simply quickly covered with tarps or other devices.
- Extraordinary attempts are often made to keep chop shop operations out of the public eye. A chop shop may be surrounded by tall fences or be entirely self-enclosed within a building. Windows and doors are often kept closed, despite the summer heat. You may also observe windows that have been boarded up or spray-painted to prevent onlookers.

# Chop Shops

- Chop shops may take unusual security precautions, such as using Closed Circuit Television Cameras (CCTV), installing barbed-wire fences, or positioning attack dogs within the perimeter of a property.
- Are vehicles observed leaving a residential or commercial property with loads of scrap automotive parts or metal? Are parts suppliers seen frequenting a particular residential or commercial property, often at odd hours?
- Does the presence of any industrial or construction equipment seem peculiar for the property in question?
- Scrap automotive parts or metal are often observed in communal trash dumpsters or seen being trucked away from the site. In some cases, box trucks or cargo vans may be used to transport surplus parts or scrap metal. Piles of automotive parts or scrap metal may also be observed piled up on the property.
- Most automotive businesses observe traditional business hours. Is there an automotive business in your neighborhood that seems to be operating around-the-clock or do you hear machinery or equipment running at night, often at sporadic intervals?

# Citizens On Patrol & Crime Watch

Fort Worth citizens,

You can become more involved in the fight against crime by joining your local **Fort Worth Police Department Citizens On Patrol** or **Crime Watch**. To inquire about Citizens On Patrol, call the COP Coordinator on your side of town:

North Division COP Coordinator	(817) 253-2996
East Division COP Coordinator	(817) 871-5220
South Division COP Coordinator	(817) 922-3400
West Division COP Coordinator	(817) 392-4740

To inquire about Crime Watch, call the Crime Prevention Specialist on your side of town:

North Division Crime Prevention Specialist	(817) 740-2119
East Division Crime Prevention Specialist	(817) 871-5200
West Division Crime Prevention Specialist	(817) 392-4764
South Division Crime Prevention Specialist	(817) 922-3400

# Auto Theft

If you have any Auto Theft questions or concerns please feel free to contact our office.

**(817) 392-4400**

Please share this  
information with others.

**STAY ALERT!**