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Media Contact:

Rachel Snell, Automobile Burglary and Theft Prevention Authority
512-465-1408, Rachel.Snell@TxDMV.gov



Avoid Becoming a Victim of Auto Crime During the Holidays
ABTPA reminds Texans to keep their parked cars secure while shopping and traveling

AUSTIN — Texans will be shopping and traveling during the holiday season, and the Auto Burglary and Theft Prevention Authority (ABTPA), part of the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles (TxDMV), urges everyone to take precautions to protect their valuables and vehicles.

The year-end holidays offer opportunities for auto crime. December has seven of the biggest shopping days of the year, both for sales and shopper traffic. In addition to parking at the airport, travelers drive an average of more than 700 miles to reach their holiday destinations, and lower gas prices this year may tempt even more people to drive.

ABTPA asks shoppers and travelers to be on guard against auto crime during this busy period. You should keep your vehicles locked and safeguard gifts. You should also remove other belongings that are visible in your cars, whether they are parked at a shopping mall, holiday movie, airport parking lot — or even a family member's driveway.

"It is important that Texans remain vigilant in protecting their valuables during the holiday season" said Bryan Wilson, director of ABTPA. "It is easy to be in a rush and leave items visible in our vehicles. It is imperative that we all take the extra time to ensure our vehicles are never unlocked and nothing is in view."

Criminals are counting on people to underestimate the threat of auto crime. Auto theft and burglary is not only a crime of opportunity but often involves organized criminal activity.

ABTPA offers shoppers and travelers these holiday tips:

- Keep shopping bags and boxes out of sight or stored in the trunk. Do the same for other valuables, like cellphones, laptops, CDs, purses and wallets. (That includes removing loose change from the console or cup holder.) Bring anything that might tempt thieves inside your home or office — even when parking your car for a short time at a place that you assume is safe.
- Never leave an idling car unattended. On cold days, when people tend to warm up their vehicles, secure your car and avoid becoming a victim of auto theft.
- Even if you are running into a store for a moment, be sure to lock your vehicle. And always keep your keys with you.
- Ask valets at restaurants to not leave keys in the vehicle.
- Safeguard your home through your vehicle. Keep garage door openers in the glove compartment or hidden, and avoid leaving mail or insurance forms visible. These can help thieves obtain your address.
- Use a car alarm if possible and leave your vehicle in busy, well-lit spots.

(more)

About the Auto Burglary and Theft Prevention Authority

ABTPA works to combat auto theft and burglary in Texas and provides financial support from fund collected from insurance companies to fight it. ABTPA supports a statewide network of law enforcement agencies through administering grants, theft-reduction initiatives and public awareness and education.

About 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.

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