

**PUFF**



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**POOF!**

**NEVER LEAVE YOUR CAR RUNNING UNATTENDED**

# NEWS HOOKS TO PUT A FREEZE ON AUTO THEFT

From Coloradans Against Auto Theft

## Story Idea: Auto Theft Spikes in Winter Months

- The cold winter weather tempts people to leave their cars running, while unattended, to warm up—commonly known as a “puffer,” an expression used by thieves. The telltale “puff” of exhaust is an invitation for thieves to steal your car.
- At least 40% of Colorado drivers admit they have left their car running while unattended. (Source: Talmey Drake poll)
- 50% of stolen cars have the keys in them. (Source: NHTSA)
- Leaving your car running while unattended is illegal in Colorado.

## Story Idea: Auto Theft is a Gateway Crime (Source: ATICC 2012 Annual Report)

- Denver ranks 3rd out of the top five Auto Theft Hot Spots in Colorado, behind Pueblo and Colorado Springs.
- 75% of auto thefts are involved in more serious crimes.
- Thieves are increasingly involved in organized criminal activity; law enforcement is seeing a core group of perpetrators that continually steal vehicles.
- Criminal operations are increasingly using stolen cars to commit organized crime, meth rings, bank robberies, identity theft and other more serious crimes.

## Photojournalism Idea: Ride Along With Law Enforcement

- **Ride-alongs:** If the weather forecast shows cold temperatures, you can be sure that there will be several calls reporting thefts due to puffer activity. Plan to ride along with law enforcement on a cold morning to respond to stolen car reports or observe the reporting activity at the police station.

To schedule, please contact CSP PIO: 303-239-4583  
or your local law enforcement PIO.



## Weather and Traffic Segues: Don't Be an Easy Target

- On cold mornings, the telltale “puff” of exhaust from a car is an invitation for thieves. Use the cold weather as an opportunity to remind citizens that although it's tempting to let your car warm up before you get in or while you run into the convenience store for coffee, it makes you an easy target for auto theft.
- Offer tips for safe ways to warm up your car: wear a hat and warm gloves when you warm up your car.
- Remind citizens that it's not only risky, but it's also illegal in Colorado to leave your car running unattended and it makes you an easy target for thieves.

## Consumer Tips: Don't Give Thieves a Holiday Present

- Holiday shopping? Put gifts and all valuables in the trunk or hidden from view.
- Never leave your car running unattended—it's illegal in Colorado and a clear invitation for thieves!
- Always lock your car.
- Park in well-lit areas.
- Don't keep a spare set of keys in the car.
- Be aware of your surroundings and report suspicious behavior.

## Consumer Tips: My Car was Stolen, Now What?

- **Report to local law enforcement.** Call immediately and give a complete report.
- Take photos of the scene, damage, etc. List all personal items that were in your stolen car. Ask for a copy of the police report for insurance.
- **Call your insurance company.** To file a claim, provide specifics on your car, contents and loss. Optional comprehensive coverage is needed to recover any monetary loss or damage.
- **Protect yourself against identity theft.** If you left your wallet or registration in your car, now the thief has your address and credit cards. Cancel your credit cards and create an identity theft report.

## Media Contacts

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**LOCKDOWN**  
COLORADANS AGAINST AUTO THEFT

For more information on Lockdown, visit [LockdownYourCar.org](http://LockdownYourCar.org)