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Puff...Puff...Poof!

A Statewide Winter Public Awareness Campaign Urges Colorado Drivers to Take Action with a Simple Crime Prevention Message

How fast can a thief steal your car? How about when you leave it warming up unattended? That's right—your car, with that telltale “puff” of exhaust signaling a thief, is suddenly “poof”! That's the safety message Coloradans Against Auto Theft (CAAT) is sending with today's launch of a statewide winter public awareness campaign warning Colorado drivers about the dangers of making their cars an easy target for thieves. It's a catchy, playful message that points to a serious, costly crime problem.

Especially on cold winter mornings, many of us don't stop to think that the urge to warm up a car—often filled with valuables and even small children—can quickly put you in the middle of a crime that just starts with a stolen vehicle. So-called “puffers” during peak winter months contribute to Colorado's auto theft problem that is being fueled by a rise in serious related crimes involving drugs, gangs and organized car theft rings. The Colorado Auto Theft Intelligence Coordination Center (ATICC) reports that auto theft has increased statewide with 11,003 car thefts in 2012, compared to 9,331 in 2011.

“It's essential to educate Coloradans that auto theft frequently is the gateway to other, serious violent crimes like burglary, identity theft, drug crimes and even homicide,” said Colorado State Patrol Chief Colonel Scott Hernandez. “The seemingly minor act of leaving your car running unattended just opens the door—recent statistics show us crime now rarely stops with a stolen car, and encouraging citizens to do their part to help prevent auto theft is an important step in making Colorado safer.”

“Even if you never leave your car running unattended or always lock it, how often do you see it happen?” says Carole Walker, Executive Director of the Rocky Mountain Insurance Information Association and CAAT Co-Chair. “Those stolen ‘puffers’ and other vehicles ultimately cost all Colorado drivers through higher insurance premiums.” The average value of a stolen vehicle is about \$6,000—this amounts to an estimated \$66 million in annual Colorado losses.

Lockdown Winter Campaign: “Puff, Puff, Poof”

The winter public awareness campaign featuring high-profile TV spots, on-line advertising, social media and earned media is targeted at engaging citizens in the dangerous, illegal practice of leaving cars warming up *without* their owners.

This year’s fresh campaign concept is designed to immediately grab people’s attention and drive home the message: You let your car puff, it will disappear, or POOF!



Campaign Educational Flyer

CAAT will also educate Colorado citizens statewide with the support of coalition partners, and auto theft task forces will distribute flyers and window clings in the community to facilitate conversations around auto theft prevention. All materials drive citizens to the Lockdown website, lockdownyourcar.org, offering a new Hot Spot map with a geo-locator tool that allows users to search auto theft in their area by plugging in their zip code. This tool helps keep citizens informed so they stay aware and extra vigilant.

Colorado auto theft task forces, made up of regional law enforcement agencies and other motor vehicle safety and insurance partners, are a part of the CAAT coalition to decrease auto theft during this peak auto theft season. For more information on the Lockdown campaign and to see which neighborhoods are auto theft hot spots, visit www.lockdownyourcar.org.

CAAT COALITION PARTNERS

- Beat Auto Theft Through Law Enforcement (BATTLE)
- Metropolitan Auto Theft Task Force (MATT)
- Southern Colorado Motor Vehicle Theft Task Force
- Western Colorado Auto Theft Task Force (WCATT)
- East Metro Auto Theft Team (EMATT)
- Commerce City/Thornton/Adams County Auto Theft Prevention Program
- Attorney General’s Auto Theft Prosecution Initiative
- Colorado Auto Theft Investigators (CATI)
- Coloradans Against Auto Theft (CAAT)
- Auto Theft Intelligence Coordination Center (ATICC)
- San Luis Valley

About Coloradans Against Auto Theft (CAAT):

Coloradans Against Auto Theft (CAAT) is a statewide auto theft prevention initiative to raise awareness about the problem and educate the public on what they can do to reduce their chances of falling victim to auto theft. CAAT is a coalition of law enforcement agencies, the Colorado State Patrol, insurance partners, LoJack and AAA Colorado. CAAT and the state auto theft task force efforts are funded in part by the Colorado Auto Theft Prevention Authority (CATPA).

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