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**NEWS RELEASE  
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**It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year... For Auto Thieves**

*Statewide Winter Public Awareness Campaign Reminds Coloradans to Lock It or Lose It*

**Denver, CO** – While Coloradans are busy decking the halls this holiday season, auto thieves are making their own wish list - a “puffer” car, left running unattended with the telltale exhaust sending up smoke signals on cold, snowy days, warmed up and ready to be stolen. Coloradans Against Auto Theft (CAAT) is kicking off December with the launch of its annual statewide winter public awareness campaign warning Colorado drivers about the dangers and illegal practice of leaving cars running unattended. Puffer cars are one of the biggest contributors to Colorado’s auto theft problem, which is on the rise according to the Colorado Auto Theft Intelligence Coordination Center.

While many Coloradans look forward to the state’s winter wonderland, it may be auto thieves who are the most eager for the snow to fall. Although puffer theft can happen anywhere, anytime - especially when drivers make it easy for would-be thieves in the winter, when drivers are more likely to leave vehicles running unattended as the car warms up or to run an errand.

**Lockdown Winter Campaign**

The Lockdown winter campaign, supported by grant funding through the Colorado Auto Theft Prevention Authority (CATPA), is conducted statewide in conjunction with law enforcement agencies, insurance companies and community partners. “Auto theft is a matter of public safety,” warns Colonel Scott Hernandez, Chief of the Colorado State Patrol. “Warming up a car on a winter day may not seem like a big risk in the moment, but the result is all too often providing easy, free transportation to a car thief intent on committing serious, violent crimes including bank robberies, homicides, and home invasions.”

“While there are many ways to deter potential car thieves, the easiest way is to simply lock your car,” said Carole Walker, Executive Director of the Rocky Mountain Insurance Information Association and CAAT Chair. “The goal of the Lock It or Lose It Campaign is to team up with law enforcement and take simple, common sense steps to help prevent your car from being stolen.”

The winter public awareness campaign features high-profile TV spots, digital radio, pre-roll, social media and earned media to drive home that message that it is never a good time to have your car stolen – whether it’s before the big dog show or your first prom. The campaign delivers the message that the best way to avoid this is to lock it or lose it.

Auto theft task forces will distribute educational materials including flyers and ice scrapers in their communities to facilitate conversations about auto theft prevention. All materials drive citizens to the Lockdown website, [LockdownYourCar.org](http://LockdownYourCar.org), offering a hot spot map with a geo-locator tool that allows users to search auto theft in their area - an incentive to be auto theft aware.

### **Auto theft, by the numbers**

- While puffer thefts are a year-round problem, the cold weather tempts people to leave their cars running unattended to warm up.
  - 50% of stolen cars are left running or have the keys in them. (Source: NHTSA)
- Leaving a car running while unattended is illegal in Colorado.
  - While 70% of Coloradans think a running car left unattended is a top way cars get stolen, nearly a quarter say they've done it.
- Colorado Auto Theft Intelligence Coordination Center (ATICC) reports auto theft has increased statewide.
  - 11,459 stolen vehicles in 2014, a 1% increase from 2013.
- Stolen 'puffers' and other vehicles ultimately cost all Colorado drivers through higher insurance premiums.
  - The average value of a stolen vehicle is about \$5,972—this amounts to an estimated \$68.4 million in annual Colorado losses.

### **What can the public do? Don't give thieves a holiday present.**

- Never leave your car running unattended - it's illegal in Colorado and a clear invitation for thieves. Warm up with your car instead. (C.R.S. 42-4-1206)
- Holiday shopping? Put gifts and all valuables in the trunk or hidden from view.
- 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 to a non-emergency police line.

### **CAAT Coalition Partners**

Colorado auto theft task forces, made up of regional law enforcement agencies, Colorado State Patrol 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.

- CATPA Metropolitan Auto Theft Team (CMATT)
- Beat Auto Theft Through Law Enforcement (BATTLE)
- Colorado Attorney General's Auto Theft Prosecution Initiative
- Colorado Auto Theft Investigators (CATI)
- Colorado Auto Theft Intelligence Coordination Center (ATICC)

### **Follow CAAT on social media for the latest news and information.**

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### **About Coloradans Against Auto Theft (CAAT):**

Coloradans Against Auto Theft (CAAT) is a statewide auto theft prevention initiative to raise awareness and educate the public on auto theft prevention. 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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