



Warren C. Evans
Sheriff

News Release

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Sheriff warns public to avoid becoming victim of rash of recent "warm up" car thefts

◆ *People who leave autos unattended while running put themselves at risk*

A recent rash of "warm up" auto thefts in the area has prompted Wayne County Sheriff Warren C. Evans to issue a crime prevention alert to local residents.

Over the past several weeks of frigid temperatures, Evans said auto theft investigators from Wayne County's ACTION (Arresting Car Thieves In Our Neighborhoods) Team has received more than a dozen complaints just from the east side of the county from people whose cars were stolen while they had left them unattended to warm up. Police agencies across metro Detroit are receiving similar complaints, Evans said.

"During cold temperatures like we have been experiencing recently, there is a great temptation to start your car up, and then go back inside to let it warm up," Evans said. "The problem is that the crooks know that a lot of people do this and are taking advantage of the situation."

Evans said that thieves often "patrol" neighborhoods looking for unoccupied running vehicles. They may work in teams, with one person driving a car and the other in the passenger's seat ready to jump out and strike when the opportunity arises. Some thieves gain easy entry into unlocked cars, while others will break out a window, if necessary.

"From that point, it can be only a matter of seconds before your car is gone," Evans said.

Evans made the following suggestions to avoid becoming a victim:

- **Install a remote car starter.** They are designed to allow the car to run without the key, but disable the vehicle if anyone puts the car in gear without first inserting the key. "You can get a good remote starter installed for about \$150, which is less than the insurance deductible most people will pay if their car is stolen," Evans said.

#more#

- **If you insist on staying inside while your car warms up, be sure to follow these important tips:**
 - Keep a watchful eye on your car from inside the house.
 - Make sure you have a backup key so you can lock the door to your car.
 - Don't keep your "warm up" key on a ring with your house keys. If you do, a thief that takes your car also will have the keys to your home.
 - If you leave your car running in the garage, partially close the garage door. This will allow the exhaust fumes to escape and serve as a deterrent to the thief by causing him to have to figure out how to open the door.

"This is one of the easiest crimes to prevent because it is a crime of opportunity," Evans said. "Simply eliminating the easy temptation will deter the majority of car thieves."

Evans also is reminding people that leaving a vehicle unattended while running on public property, such as the street in front of your home, is civil infraction. "I don't think you'd see many police officers writing tickets for that, but they do have that option," Evans said.