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A public information organization of insurance companies

****NEWS RELEASE****

FOR RELEASE: AT WILL

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AUTO THEFT STILL A CONCERN IN MISSOURI

"Auto theft continues to be a major problem for law enforcement, insurance companies and especially Missouri motorists," an insurance industry spokesman said today.

According to statistics released by the Missouri Highway Patrol, there were 17,751 vehicles reported stolen in the state during 2009.

"Though the number of auto thefts was slightly down from 2008, the crime of auto theft still continues to be a big business and Missouri motorists are paying for it," according to Brent Butler, government affairs director of the Missouri Insurance Information Service.

"Reports from Kansas City and St. Louis reveal that these two cities remain primary targets for Missouri's auto theft problem," he explained. "Although there were a few less auto thefts in these two jurisdictions than in 2008, collectively almost 50% of all vehicles stolen statewide were from these municipalities."

"Estimating the value of stolen vehicles at a national average of \$6,755 per loss, auto theft cost Missouri almost \$120 million last year," Butler said.

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The National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB) is operating a toll-free hot line to handle reports of auto theft and fraud. Rewards of up to \$1,000 are offered for tips leading to convictions. The hot line number is 800-TEL-NICB, or 800-835-6422.

In addition, Butler suggested some safety tips provided by the insurance industry to help reduce the chance of your car being stolen:

- ❖ Lock your car, close all windows and pocket the key.
- ❖ Park with front wheels turned sharply to the right or left, making it difficult for the professional thief to tow your car away.
- ❖ When parking a front wheel drive model, pull on the emergency brake and place the vehicle in "park". If you have a stick shift, pull on the emergency brake and shift into forward or reverse gear. All four wheels will be locked making it difficult for a thief to tow your car.
- ❖ Put packages or valuables out of sight.
- ❖ Activate any theft deterrent device you may have.
- ❖ Park in a well-lighted area.
- ❖ If you park in a commercial lot or garage, leave only the ignition key with the attendant. Retain all others.
- ❖ If you have a garage, use it. Lock both the vehicle and the garage.

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**MISSOURI AUTO THEFT STATISTICS
MOST STOLEN IN 2009**

Passenger Cars

1. Dodge Intrepid
2. Ford Taurus
3. Dodge Stratus
4. Pontiac Grand Prix
5. Pontiac Grand Am
6. Chevrolet Impala
7. Honda Accord
8. Oldsmobile Cutlass
9. Chevrolet Malibu
10. Chevrolet Monte Carlo

Source: Missouri State Highway Patrol