



NEWS

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LAW ENFORCEMENT 'APPLIES THE BRAKES' TO AUTO THIEVES

California enjoys its largest decrease in vehicle theft since 1996

(Sacramento) Vehicle theft is in its third year of decline in California; its largest decrease in more than 10 years. According to California Highway Patrol (CHP) statistics, in 2008 there was a 12.2 percent decrease in the number of vehicle thefts statewide. While the sizable shift is encouraging news for members of California's law enforcement community, the insurance industry and vehicle owners statewide, there's still more work to be done.

"Even with the decrease in vehicle theft, the economic loss to Californians continues to exceed \$1 billion," said CHP Commissioner Joe Farrow. "I applaud the work of our officers as well as police officers and sheriff's deputies throughout the state to reduce the incidences of vehicle theft. With the continued efforts of California law enforcement agencies, coupled with prevention efforts by the public, we hope the numbers will continue to fall with each passing year."

Of the 199,766 reported stolen vehicles in California last year, 86.8 percent of those vehicles were recovered.

Among the state's 58 counties, Sierra County showed the biggest reduction in the percentage of vehicles stolen at 100 percent. Conversely, Mono County had a 133.3 percent increase in the number of vehicles stolen last year. Southern California continues to be a hot spot for vehicle theft. Approximately 55.8 percent of all thefts occurred in Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and San Diego counties.

"The cheapest form of defense is to simply employ the anti-theft devices that are standard on all vehicles: locks," added Commissioner Farrow. "Lock your car and take your keys."

Additional tips to ensure your vehicle remains where you left it:

- Park in a well-lit, populated area
- Don't warm up or leave your vehicle running unattended
- Consider a visible or audible device that alerts thieves the vehicle is protected

- more -

- Immobilizing devices prevent thieves from bypassing the ignition and hotwiring a vehicle
- Tracking devices can be very effective in helping authorities recover stolen vehicles

Honda and Toyota models continue to be popular among car thieves; Toyota has consistently ranked as the most frequently stolen pickup truck since 1984.

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