



**NEWS RELEASE  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**Puff...Puff...Poof!**

*Statewide Winter Public Awareness Campaign Reminds Colorado Drivers:  
Puffer Theft Can Happen Anytime, Anywhere*

**Denver, CO** – It can happen in an instant. A thief sees the telltale puff of exhaust from a car warming up with no owner in sight and *Puff...Puff...Poof* it's gone. Today Coloradans Against Auto Theft (CAAT) launches a statewide public awareness campaign warning Colorado drivers about the dangers of, and illegal practice of, leaving cars running unattended. So-called "puffers" contribute to Colorado's auto theft problem, which rose nearly 5% in 2013 according to the Colorado Auto Theft Intelligence Coordination Center.

The simple act of leaving your car running unattended can have extremely serious consequences. Recently, a puffer vehicle theft ended in violence with an Aurora Police Officer being shot during a routine traffic stop. "Too often we don't consider the repercussions of making cars an easy target for thieves and how our vehicle will be used by these criminals," says Lieutenant Jeff Foster, Aurora Police Department and Commander of the East Metro Auto Theft Team (EMATT). "Auto theft is a gateway crime to other serious crimes and the thieves themselves pose a danger to the public."

**Lockdown Winter Campaign: Puff...Puff...Poof!**

The Lockdown 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. "The best way to reverse the increasing trend of auto theft is through a combination of law enforcement and public education," said Colonel Scott Hernandez, Chief of the Colorado State Patrol. "The Lockdown Winter campaign encourages Coloradans to warm up *with* their cars to deter thieves."

Auto theft is a crime of opportunity. "Puffer thefts can happen anywhere, anytime when we make it easy for the thieves—and while puffer thefts spike in the winter, we see a steady puffer problem throughout the year," said Carole Walker, Executive Director of the Rocky Mountain Insurance Information Association and CAAT co-chair. "Many of us don't stop to think that the urge to warm up a car can quickly put us in the middle of serious crimes that start with a stolen vehicle.



The winter public awareness campaign features high-profile TV spots, online advertising, social media and earned media to highlight the dangerous, illegal practice of leaving cars running unattended. The campaign concept drives home the message: You let your car puff, it will disappear, or POOF!

Auto theft task forces will distribute educational materials in the community to facilitate conversations around 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, auto theft spikes during winter when 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.
  - 44% of Coloradans don't know leaving a car running unattended is illegal, and 35% have admitted to doing it (2014 Talmey-Drake Poll)
- Colorado Auto Theft Intelligence Coordination Center (ATICC) reports auto theft has increased statewide.
  - 11,502 stolen vehicles in 2013, up nearly 5% from 2012.
- 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.

### **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.
- 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.

- Beat Auto Theft Through Law Enforcement (BATTLE)
- Metropolitan Auto Theft Task Force (MATT)
- Southern Colorado Reducing Auto Theft Team (SCRATT)
- 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

### **Media ride-alongs available upon request.**

For ride-along opportunities, please contact your local law enforcement, Colorado State Patrol PIOs or Annie Coghill on behalf of CAAT at 303-832-2700, ext. 202.

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

**Facebook:** [ColoradansAgainstAutoTheft](https://www.facebook.com/ColoradansAgainstAutoTheft)

**Twitter:** [StopAutoTheftCO](https://twitter.com/StopAutoTheftCO)

Click [here](#) to watch the Winter campaign television spot.

**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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