



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 16, 2021

ST. CHARLES COUNTY POLICE URGE CITIZENS TO REMAIN CAUTIOUS ABOUT AUTO THEFTS, BREAK-INS AND CATALYTIC CONVERTER THEFTS

ST. CHARLES COUNTY, MO – Auto thefts in the St. Charles County region continue to be top of mind for law enforcement and prosecutors. The St. Charles County Police Department and the County’s Prosecuting Attorney’s Office joined St. Louis County area departments for a press conference Tuesday, Nov. 16, to raise awareness and show unity in addressing a recent upsurge in car break-ins, motor vehicle thefts, and catalytic converter thefts.

In St. Charles County, an uptick in break-ins and thefts at the beginning of this year led the police chiefs in St. Charles County, supported by County Prosecuting Attorney Tim Lohmar, to form a task force to combat the problem. The task force made more than 100 arrests by mid-April, seized weapons and recovered stolen cars. Lohmar committed that anyone caught stealing or breaking into a vehicle in St. Charles County will face charges from his office that will require mandatory jail time and he will seek higher bonds.

Surveillance and statistics show the thieves run in groups, according to Chief Frisz. While there have been 65 motor vehicle thefts and 53 thefts from motor vehicles thus far this year (down 63.5 percent and 43.5 percent from 2020, respectively), arrests for those crimes are up. Motor vehicle thefts have resulted in the arrest of 76 juveniles and 342 adults this year, while 127 juveniles and 316 adults have been arrested for stealing from cars.

Both the number of motor vehicle thefts and thefts of valuables from motor vehicles are down substantially year-to-date in 2021 from 2020, but catalytic converter thefts have increased 17.5 percent, with 47 reported in the county this year. Police have arrested six juveniles and 64 adults for those crimes so far.

Citizens are asked to remain alert, especially during the holidays.

“These crimes haven’t just become an issue as the holidays approach,” Chief Frisz says. “We have been addressing them all year. But thefts of all kinds can intensify over the holidays, and we are asking everyone to observe safety precautions. We tell people to ‘lock it or lose it,’ for a reason.”

Chief Frisz says perpetrators target unlocked vehicles with keys or fobs left in them or other valuables left unsecured and in plain view. He advises car owners to park in well-lit areas and close to building entrances, when possible. “If you have a garage, park your car in it and keep the garage door closed,” he says.

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Catalytic converters, however, are more difficult to protect. They are targeted because they are relatively easy to steal and are made of metals that can be stripped and sold. Besides parking in well-lit or protected areas, having the converter welded to your car's frame, engraving your vehicle identification number (VIN) on the converter to alert a scrap dealer it has been stolen, and setting your car's alarm to go off when it detects vibration are other ways to help protect catalytic converter theft.

Chief Frisz has a word of caution for people who see someone trying to steal their car or converter: "Call 9-1-1," he says. "If you're at home, turn on the lights. Don't confront them because very often they are armed."

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About St. Charles County:

St. Charles County, Missouri, founded in 1812, is one of the fastest growing counties in Missouri. With a population of 405,262, is it the state's third largest county. It is home to 17 scenic county parks encompassing nearly 4,000 acres with additional land under development and more in reserve for future development.

With one of the largest economies in the state, St. Charles County is home to multinational companies including General Motors, Citi, MasterCard Worldwide and Boeing. It is ranked among the top 25 counties in the nation in high-tech job growth by the Progressive Policy Institute and consistently has the lowest unemployment rate in the Metropolitan St. Louis area.

St. Charles County Government has more than 1,170 employees in more than 30 departments and offices who work to make the county an excellent place to live, work and shop. For more information, please visit sccmo.org.