



Contact: Sara Spaulding, APR
Public Information Officer
303-324-1711
sspaulding@ci.wheatridge.co.us

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Wheat Ridge Police Offer Tips During Puffer Week Starting January 26, 2020 *It only takes a moment to become a victim of auto theft*

WHEAT RIDGE, Colo. Jan. 23, 2020 – The Wheat Ridge Police Department is joining with Coloradans Against Auto Theft (CAAT), Colorado Auto Theft Investigators (CATI), and other law enforcement agencies across the state for Puffer Awareness Week from Jan. 26-Feb. 1, 2020.

A car idling on a cold morning leaves a calling card for auto thieves with that telltale puff of exhaust. Cruising neighborhoods, often in pairs, they look for so called “puffer” vehicles parked in front of homes, apartment buildings, and even local coffee shops or convenience stores. One drives the car; another is ready to jump out at the first sign of an unattended vehicle that is running. It takes only seconds to jump in and drive off.

“The reality is that it only takes a moment for a thief to drive off with your car if it is unlocked and idling in your driveway,” states Sergeant Dawkins, Crime Prevention. “If a thief can break a window and drive off with your car because the keys are in the ignition, you are breaking the law. Using a remote start is a safe, legal alternative because your running car is locked and even if the thief breaks your window they can’t drive away. However, make sure the key fob isn’t inside the car if you used an app to get the car started. Take the extra time to warm up your car the right way and keep your car safe from thieves this winter,” continued Dawkins.

Puffer Week is an annual statewide awareness and enforcement campaign warning Colorado drivers about the risks and dangers of theft from puffing.

The Colorado Auto Theft Intelligence Coordination Center (ATICC) reports that there were 20,230 vehicles stolen across the state in 2019. Puffer cars contribute to Colorado’s auto theft problem, and they are often involved in subsequent crimes, such as armed robbery, identity theft, home invasion, and drug-related offenses.

While auto theft is a year-round problem, it typically spikes in cold weather months when drivers are more likely to leave their cars idling unattended to warm up. Victims of puffer theft often say they “just went in to get some coffee”, ‘ran back into the house to get my purse’, or that they were “only gone for a second.’

Tips for Avoiding Car Theft

- Never leave a running car unattended
- In cold weather, warm up with the car: grab a hot cup of coffee, gloves and a jacket. It shouldn’t take long –most cars warm up in a matter of minutes.
- Park in an enclosed garage whenever possible
- Use a remote start if available, make sure the doors are locked, and the keyless fob is far enough away that the vehicle can’t be moved
- Lock car doors every single time, even in the driveway
- Don’t leave an extra set of keys inside the car
- Don’t leave valuables in plain view

- Always park in a well-lit area
- Invest in anti-theft technology (e.g., alarm system, Club)
- Use the [Hot Spot Map](#) to view local auto thefts

The top 10 makes and models most likely to be stolen are the Honda Civic, Honda Accord, Ford F-250, Chevrolet Silverado, Ford F-150, Dodge Ram, Ford F-350, Subaru Legacy, GMC Sierra, and Jeep Grand Cherokee.

About Wheat Ridge Police Department

The Wheat Ridge Police Department focuses on community policing where officers can gain skills, expand their knowledge, and become part of a team of officers and staff who know and trust each other. A department of 83 sworn and 24.5 non-sworn, WRPD serves a thriving community bordered on the east by Denver, on the west by Golden, on the north by Arvada, and on the south by Lakewood. The City of 9.5 square miles has a population of 31,000. New development is currently underway in a number of locations bringing new residents and businesses to this vibrant community known locally as “Sweet Ridge.”

###